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DAVID RIESMAN *on the Transatlantic Personality*

EGOCENTRISM



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changing again?*

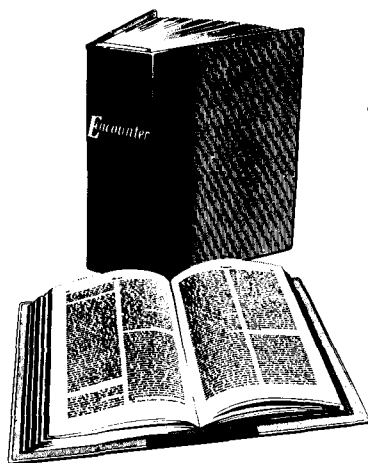
Edited by Martin Lash & Anthony Thwaite

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John Wain

Cargo

I SNIFFED TROUBLE as soon as the man with the lop-sided face walked in. He came through the door with his eyes already trained across the room at the girl behind the bar, as she stood there quietly polishing a glass. And there was something challenging in the way he walked over to her, concentrating fiercely on her face, as if he were going straight to the bar not to buy a drink but to pick a quarrel with the barmaid. The thought came to me: perhaps he's her husband. So I sat still, and looked down into my pint of beer as if searching for specks in it, all ready to mind my own business and keep out of theirs.

I'd have done that in any case. I was lucky to find this pub. It had been raining that day and I'd had enough of walking. More than enough. My legs were chapped from trudging along in soaking wet trousers, my raincoat was clinging to my body like wet paper, my shoes were squelching and I was dead tired from dragging my feet through the slippery mud, taking one step back for every two forward. My pack was heavy and the straps were beginning to cut into my shoulders.

I'm not asking anybody to be sorry for me. I was doing it from choice. When I unexpectedly found in late March that I could take a week off work I immediately set out on something I'd always vaguely intended to do—a walking tour. But not just any old walking tour: a towpath walk, in which for the whole week I would follow the canals wherever they led me.

Not that I'm a canal fanatic, always quoting statistics and reading up the history of the waterways. My motives were simple. If you follow the canal you know you're going from A to B. I like walking but I'm lazy about reading maps and planning routes, which to some people is half the pleasure of doing it. I thought

if I got beside the canal and started walking, there would be no problem of navigation. So I took a backpack, a stout stick and thick shoes, and set off with the water on my right and the hedge on my left.

For two days I'd got along fine. But day three dawned with blustering wind and cold drenching rain. The canal seemed perversely to shake off all company and strike out into dull, flat Midland countryside. I sloshed along for hours without so much as a building in sight, let alone a pub; just wide, featureless fields and that eternal driving rain. Having missed lunch, I deserted the canal at about four o'clock when it passed under a road bridge, and walked to a village where I got some food at a dejected little grocery shop—buns, apples, that sort of thing—and walked back to the canal along the glistening wet road, munching and shivering.

It was nearly six when I got to this pub, and I'd had enough. If all this sounds feeble, I'll just mention that I am in my forties, sedentary, rather a comfort-lover, no longer with the warm blood and elastic muscles of youth. I knocked on the side door of the pub about fifteen minutes before they were due to open, and asked if they could put me up. The landlord hesitated for a long time; he said they had a room, but it hadn't been used all winter. They didn't look for overnight people before the season started. The bed would have to be aired... I was obviously a nuisance. But he was a decent man, about my own age, thick-set, going bald, with a red-cheeked, humorous face and direct, honest eyes, and as his gaze travelled over my soaked trousers and coat, my mud-loaded shoes, sodden hat and rain-plastered wisps of hair, I could see in his face that I was in.

"I've lit the fire in the bar", he said, considering, "and you can sit in there while Jackie

gets your room ready. She'll do it as soon as she comes."

Even as he spoke a girl came round the side of the building and said, "I'm a bit early, Ron, I got a lift." Jackie had come.

"We've got an overnight resident", said Ron. "I wasn't looking to start taking people in, but I don't think he'll be fussy. It's bad walking weather and he's come a long way."

"I wouldn't turn a dog out who looked as wet as that", she said and laughed. Her laugh was warm and musical. I looked at her through the drops that hung on my hat-brim. She was about twenty-five, not beautiful but very feminine. I couldn't see how she had her hair because she was wearing a rain-hood that concealed it, but she had broad cheekbones and big, alert eyes, and even with her bulky overcoat on I could see that she had a good shape. Ron held the door open and Jackie motioned me to go in ahead of her.

"Ladies first", I said.

"You're wetter than I am", she said and laughed again.

I was just going to follow when Ron said to me, "I'll show you where to leave your wet things. No point in trailing tons of water upstairs."

He opened the door of a kind of glassed-in porch just beside the bar entrance. "This place gets a bit of the heat from the kitchen", he said. "The wife uses it for drying clothes and growing a few house-plants. I should leave your coat in here. And your boots", he added, glancing at my muddy brogues.

I could see that his kindness went along with a perfectly firm decision not to have his nice clean pub made dirty and wet by any Tom, Dick or Harry who came out of the night.

"Thanks", I said. I slipped off my backpack, rummaged in it and produced a pair of slippers. "I'll wear these in the house." I felt, suddenly, that I was back at prep-school, working hard to convince my housemaster that I was going to obey the rules and give no trouble. I'm a line-of-least-resistance man, if you hadn't gathered that already.

Ron nodded pleasantly and went into the bar. I hung up my sodden raincoat, spreading it out as much as possible, changed into my slippers and went in after him. There was a bright coal fire in the grate, the lights were all on, the evening paper was neatly folded on the bar, and there were no customers yet. All of a

sudden a walking-tour in late March seemed a good idea, where ten minutes previously it had seemed a wretched piece of foolishness. I walked over to the fire and sat close to it, blinking gratefully and thawing out.

After a few minutes Ron poked his head into the bar and talked about food. Apparently his wife always cooked a high tea about six, and they sat down to it in the quiet time before the pub got busy, leaving the bar to Jackie for the first few customers. "We don't get much trade till about seven", he said, "but we get a few strugs sometimes." I liked "strugs." It obviously meant isolated stray stragglers, or people like me who had struggled to the pub. Then, after the evening's work, they all sat down to a light supper before Jackie went home. I was welcome to share either or both. I settled, gratefully, for the first and possibly the second.

Ron's wife, a buxom woman who was his exact female counterpart, turned out a neat lamb chop with sprouts and mashed potatoes, and a pot of tea on the side. I despatched a good helping in their cheerful company, then, with a marvellous sense of well-being, went into the bar. It was, as I've just said, that perfect time when the place is neat and tidy and empty, with the fire burning brightly and the lights making everything cheerful. Jackie gave me a nice smile as she drew my pint, and I knew I was going to have a comfortable evening, with ten hours of deep sleep at the end of it, while the rain poured down out of the bleak sky outside. I selected a chair near the fire, but not so near that I'd feel guilty and move when customers began to come in, and settled down in a state of blissful content.

THEN THE MAN with the lop-sided face came in. With that fixed, challenging look in his eyes, he went over to the bar and got up on a high stool, so that he was close to Jackie and his face was on a dead level with hers. In the silence, so complete that the little noises from the fire sounded positively loud, I waited for him to speak, but he didn't.

Jackie went on polishing the glass she was holding. When it was finished she picked up another and started on that. She seemed ready to polish every glass in the pub before she looked at the man or spoke to him.

By now I was quite certain there was trouble between them. By God, I thought, he *is* her husband. No one else would be so angry with her.

I tried to keep my head down, but sheer fascination made me look up stealthily at Jackie. Her head was held high. She had dark-blond hair caught up in heavy braids at the back; one could imagine it falling in a rich cascade when she let it loose at night. She was wearing a cardigan that hid her shapely arms and disguised her bosom, and everything else was out of sight behind the bar, but you could see she was a lot of woman.

I took a nervous pull at my beer, just for something to do and to hide my face for a moment, and as I set the tankard down I heard his voice for the first time. It had a lot of edge to it. Like something you'd use for cutting through metal.

"Well, am I going to get some service? I didn't come in here to die of thirst."

Jackie flicked a glance across his face and said, "You haven't said what you want."

"You know I always have the same." His knuckles, on the dark wood of the bar, went white.

"I know what you generally have, but you might change your mind and have something different, and then if I'd poured out the wrong thing I'd be stuck with it."

A sudden change came over him. Every line of his body altered as he slumped, more relaxed. A smile climbed up one side of his face, making it look more lop-sided than ever; his voice, though still grating, took on a wheedling note.

"Oh, come *on*. You know I wouldn't do that to you."

She said nothing.

"All right", he said, "I'll do it your way. A light special, please, Miss."

She opened a half-pint bottle of light ale, poured it carefully into a pint glass, and filled it up from the bitter pump.

"Forty-four", she said.

"Forty-four? It was forty-two last week."

"The brewery put their prices up."

Silently he counted out the money. As he watched her put it into the till, he said in that rueful, wheedling voice, "Shan't be able to afford to come in here, at this rate."

She said nothing.

"I'll have to hang about outside to catch a

glimpse of you."

"Give it up", she said curtly.

"Oh, I couldn't do that", he said, trying the smile on again.

"You'll have to sooner or later, why not now?" she said indifferently, picking up another glass to polish.

"Why shall I?"

"You know", Jackie said, compressing her lips.

"You're not like this with everybody", he complained.

"Like what?"

"This unwelcoming. Stand-offish."

"My feelings are my own business."

"So are mine", he parried quickly.

She lifted her eyes and held his for a second, then turned her back and said dismissively, over her shoulder, "Go home to your wife. She's the one that's waiting for you."

He drank from his glass, angrily; then stared hard at the back of her neck and said, with cold venom, "Come off it, Jackie girl."

"Come off what?" she said to the shelf of bottles.

"You're not that fussy", he said flatly.

This time she turned to face him. "Don't tell me whether I'm fussy or not. You're married, go home to your wife."

"All right, you're telling me what I ought to do. And I'm telling you you're not fussy."

"What's it to you", she hissed, "whether I'm fussy or not?"

He allowed a small silence to build up, and into it he spoke softly, not looking at her.

"A lot of men are married. You're not that fussy with all of them."

She put down the glass and the cloth and stared at him. "I'm not hearing you. It's not true that you just said what I thought you said."

"What did I say?"

"You insulted me. You came into my place of work and insulted me. There's a law against that."

"All I said was—"

"Yes, I know what you said."

I was beginning to feel very much an unnecessary third party. It was really embarrassing. But if I started to try to leave, they would remember that I was there, and resent it all the more. As long as I kept still they would be oblivious of me, wrapped up as they were in mutual enmity. So I kept still.

Besides, it was interesting.

"All right", he was saying. "All right. I told you the truth for once. A bloke can be married and you don't care a damn if you fancy him enough."

"I know who you're talking about. You don't even know whether he's married or not."

He laughed scornfully. "Don't give me that. You know damn well he's married. He's got kids."

"Well, so've you."

"We're not talking about me."

"You were a moment ago."

Nonplussed by this piece of feminine logic, he stopped short, drank from his glass again, brought it down with a sharp noise on the bar, and said, "This line about go back to your wife and kids. If you used it to everybody I wouldn't mind."

"I don't care whether you mind or not."

RON CAME IN through the door behind the bar and said with impersonal brightness, "Evening, Geoff."

Geoff's asymmetrical face became expressionless. He seemed to shrink inside himself, to grow less tall on his stool. He managed, "Evening, Ron."

The landlord's entry had evidently broken some kind of spell. Whatever was the precise nature of the heat that Geoff was putting on Jackie (and I had already formed several plausible guesses), he found it impossible to keep up under the landlord's genial but watchful eye. He sat very still and stared into his beer glass rather than her face. I noticed her shoot a grateful glance at Ron, who gave no sign of knowing that any kind of situation was afoot but who probably knew more than he let on about what went on in his own pub.

The evening now entered another phase. Two youths came in and played darts and put coins in the juke-box. The racket made any kind of general talk impossible, and I began to resign myself to spending the evening with my own drowsy thoughts. But after about half an hour the two young chaps drank up their beer and suddenly left, and since no one else was disposed to feed the juke-box, the bar sank back into a grateful silence. By that time, two other customers had come in, a tall, stringy old man with a mane of white hair and a tubby

fellow, thirty-fiveish, in a greasy blue suit.

Slowly, with nobody in a hurry, a conversation grew up between these two and Ron and Geoff, and occasionally it reached out to include me. I gradually pieced together that the white-maned old man had spent his working life on the canal. The tubby chap, who seemed like the type who would have a wayside petrol station, was very ready with his opinions, and the dignified old man sat and looked benign and only spoke when appealed to. I had the curious impression that Geoff wanted to talk more than the other two. He did not strike me as a garrulous man, but I noticed that it was he who pushed the conversation forward, and also that he kept it firmly to one subject—which, again, I would not have expected him to be interested in: transport by canal-boat.

For instance. After a short silence, he opened up to the old man with, "How's it going then, Walter?"

"How's what going?"

"Retirement. Being a gentleman of leisure."

"I got plenty to do", said the patriarch firmly.

"You should see him", said the tubby man. "Walter wouldn't know how to be idle. Rewiring his garage, he is now. Getting lights and power-tools in there. And he hasn't even got a car."

"I shall let it out", said the old man.

"Ah, you got into the habit of working", said Geoff. "All those years when the water was busy."

"It's busier than ever now", said the tubby man.

Geoff shook his head. "Not really. Just in the summer."

"The season's getting longer all the time", said the old man. "It used to be July, August, September, for cruisers. Now it's Easter to November. Full up all the time."

Geoff was curiously insistent. "It doesn't make a working year. Not like when the carriers were on the water."

"Ah, them", the old man conceded. "That was a long time ago."

"Coal kept going the longest", said the tubby man. "Right into the fifties."

"Ah, coal", said the old man. "And bicycles. They lasted a fair while. Remember them? Crates of bikes, for export. Two hundred bikes on a narrow boat. Crated, they were." He drank meditatively.

"The carrying trade isn't quite dead yet", said Geoff. He seemed to me to be speaking with a kind of weighted casualness, as if his words, unimportant in themselves, carried a hidden meaning. "You know who I mean?" he said to the room in general.

"Search me", said the tubby man.

"Come on, use your memory", Geoff urged. "You know him. You've seen him in here."

"Who is it?" the tubby man asked.

"It's a memory test", said Geoff teasingly. "Come on, think."

The old man said, "I know who he's talking about."

"I think we all do", said Geoff. He looked across at Jackie as he spoke.

"There's been no commercial boat along this canal", said the landlord, "since Tom gave up."

"Ah, but that's just it", said Geoff.

Jackie twisted the top off a bottle of tonic and said, "Just what?"

"You know as well as I do", he said.

"If you're talking about Tom", she said, turning to face him, "Tom's given up. He's out of the carrying. He's going in for charter."

"That's what he told you, is it?" he grinned, happy to have her flustered and on the defensive.

"Never mind what he told me or didn't tell me", she snapped.

"It must be", said the old man, thinking, "best part of a year since Tom came through here."

"Ask Jackie", Geoff sneered. "She'll remember when it was."

"Leave Jackie out of it", said the landlord. "I'll have no personal arguments in my pub. Better find something else to talk about."

"It's a free country", Geoff scowled.

"May be, but this isn't a free pub. I run it and I'm a right fascist pig."

For a moment the two men stared at each other, but it was Geoff who looked down first and said sulkily, "Another light special, Jackie, if you're serving."

"I'll serve it", Ron said. In icy silence he poured out the beer and said, "Forty-four, Geoff."

That slight touch of approachability, the tiny concession implied in the use of Geoff's name, struck me, watching interestedly from my corner, as a beautiful piece of tact, saying gently but clearly, "Behave yourself, and all shall be as it has been."

Geoff took the tankard and paid and said, "All right, but if you think Tom's given up you're in for quite a surprise."

"What kind of a surprise would that be?" the old man asked mildly.

"Quite a big one." Geoff was enjoying some kind of triumph—I couldn't tell yet what it was. He knew something, and was gleefully sitting on that knowledge.

"Well, let's have it, before I drop dead", said the landlord shortly.

"You wouldn't believe me", said Geoff. "I think I'll let you just find out."

Jackie turned and walked out of the bar. "I'm going to see to those pasties", she said to Ron. He nodded agreement. As she went through the service door behind the bar she turned back to look at Geoff and said, "If Tom wants to surprise anybody he'll do it his own way."

"You can say that again", he countered, but she had gone, leaving a quiver of anger in the air.

Ron said calmly, "Would you like to have your next drink somewhere else, Geoff?"

Geoff settled himself firmly on his stool and said, "All right if I stay till I've finished this?"

Ron looked at him for a moment and then nodded. But his eyes were very cold.

"That crowd down at the Manor", said the tubby man suddenly, in a loud, let's-start-over-again voice. "They got relegation staring them in the face."

"They want a new manager", said the old man.

"They've had four managers in ten years and it still hasn't made them play good football", Ron contributed. The talk rippled, the moment of crisis had passed; Geoff made no further effort to corral us all within his chosen subject.

About ten o'clock the patriarch and the tubby man left. As they opened the door the chill of the drenching rain smacked into the room. I had a sudden vision of myself the next morning, breakfast over and the bill paid, with the rain still falling and nowhere to go but onward along that liquid towpath. But I banished such thoughts, got myself another beer, and sat down again in my warm corner. We were peaceful now, just the four of us, two on each side of the bar. Because of course Geoff was immovable. Since he had made no more trouble, Ron wasn't pressing his sugges-

tion that he should move along and get his next drink in another pub. He tolerated him, sitting with a spider's patience on that tall stool, one elbow on the bar and his eyes on Jackie's face.

I became aware of the slow, heavy tick of the clock on the wall. Well, this was the peace I had come to find: physical tiredness, quiet, relaxation. Then the door opened and a burly man brought a gust of rain in with him. He stood on the mat for a moment, shaking his wet coat. He was wearing one of those donkey-jackets with leather across the shoulders, and a soaking woollen cap with a bobble. For some reason I knew at once that this was Tom.

When he had finished shaking himself he looked round the room, taking in who was there. A smile grew on his face: broad, genial, but with a touch of the defensive and behind that, a tiny hint of mockery. He nodded at the landlord. "Hello, Ron."

"Well, Tom", said the landlord, "Quite a surprise."

Jackie stood perfectly still. She looked at Tom and then down at her hands.

Tom walked across to the bar and stood beside Geoff. Geoff stared intently into his face, but Tom didn't return the compliment. He gazed round in an easy, benevolent way at the warm, bright room, the bottles behind the bar, the dark polished wood, and the waiting faces. "Good to be here", he said.

"What'll it be?" Jackie asked, her voice very quiet.

"A double whisky, Jackie, and a pint of beer standing by to chase it", Tom said in that easy, pleasant way. His accent struck me as incongruous with his appearance. The black sheep of a good family, perhaps. Somewhere along the line he had had an education. He was about forty, with a broad, short-nosed face and large, clear eyes. His dark hair was close-cropped and just beginning to grizzle. There was something about the line of his arms and shoulders that told you he had worked with his body for a long time.

"I suppose this is the surprise you were telling us about, Geoff", said the landlord in a dry, off-hand way.

"You could say that", returned Geoff in lopsided glee.

"Surprise?" said Tom. He threw back his head and swallowed the whisky in one fiery gulp, then picked up his pint tankard.

Jackie said with sudden venom, "Geoff's been sitting there waiting for you to come in. He wanted to see our faces." She turned to Geoff, her eyes glittering with hostility. "Well, go on, look at them."

"Anything to oblige", he grinned.

Tom put down his glass and said, "What's the big surprise, then?"

"Oh, don't pretend", Jackie was fighting back now. "We'd all got used to not seeing you any more. We'd learnt to do without you."

"I have to go where trade takes me", he said.

"Trade, ay", said Geoff softly. He put a sting of mockery into the word. This was his big scene and he was out to enjoy it.

There was a silence and then Ron said, "Where are you moored, Tom?"

"Usual place. Down by the bridge."

"Going through to Brum tomorrow?"

"Could be." Tom put down his empty glass. "Fill that up, Jackie, please, and tell me if you've got anything to eat."

"There are pasties. Just made this evening."

"Good, I'll have a couple."

SHE WENT OUT—thankfully, it seemed to me—and there was a silence. Nobody wanted to speak except Geoff, who was evidently getting ready for some sort of needling attack. He was looking at Tom like an angler who has landed a large and rare fish. But there was something else in his expression too; it was as if the angler hated this particular fish and had been vengefully trying to catch it for a long time. And there it was in the net, beautiful and shining and hateful.

Geoff twisted on his stool a few times and then said, "Back in business, eh, Tom?"

"I've never been out of business", said Tom shortly.

"We thought you'd given up. Refitted and gone into charter."

"You thought that, did you?" Tom said easily. The other man's voice seemed to affect him as distantly as the buzzing of a fly.

Geoff waited another few seconds and then said, "I'm sure that's what Jackie thought."

"You know something, Geoff?" said the landlord. "I don't think Jackie likes the amount of interest you take in her private life."

"I'm damn' sure I wouldn't, in her place",

said Tom to the bottles in front of him.

"Right", said Geoff, seeing his chance, "and there's nobody knows her place better than you, is there, Tom?"

Tom's answer was not verbal. He did not even turn his head to look at his would-be tormentor. Instead he put out his left arm and, with the large square hand against Geoff's throat, pinned his lanky body against the wall. The stool tilted over, but Geoff could not slide to the floor. He was held against the wall like a beetle in a show-case. Then without haste, Tom brought up his right fist. I could sense his powerful body getting ready to wheel round and bring the fist thudding into Geoff's belly. But the landlord, quick and watchful, reached across and took hold of that right wrist.

"No, Tom", he said. "No blood on the floor in my pub. He'll leave you alone, I'll answer for that. Just let him get out of the place in one piece."

Slowly Tom lowered his right fist. But with his left he still held Geoff jammed against the bar. Geoff made a convulsive effort to get free, but there was no hope of it.

"Don't get my place a bad name", Ron urged.

Suddenly Tom let go and Geoff slid down the wall, landing in a sitting position. He got up and stood rubbing his throat. At that moment Jackie came back with the pasties.

"Out of here. Now. Don't come back", said the landlord to Geoff.

Geoff picked up his overcoat and put it on. Very slowly, with all their eyes on him, he fastened the buttons. While he did so he looked straight in front of him, but when he had finished and was ready to go he turned his face towards Jackie for an instant. It was a mask of suffering and hatred. I shrank back, grateful that in my own uneventful life I had never had such a look trained on me.

THEN THE DOOR opened again and another man came in. Behind him I could see the glistening rods of rain still coming down. He stood just inside the door, as Tom had done, with the water running off him in the same way.

Everybody turned and looked at him. Even Geoff took his eyes off Jackie. They all looked at the newcomer in silence, and so did I. Geoff

had been on his way to the door but he stood still now.

The newcomer was a tall young man with a brown skin, and very good-looking. He wore a grey suit that fitted him perfectly and had obviously cost money. Because he was hatless, his dark hair had absorbed so much water that it lay like a heavy soaked mop on his head. But you could tell that even when it was dry and brushed out it would still be glossy and shining. His eyes were the usual large, dark orbs of the sub-continent, his face strong, his jaw tensely set. He stood still and looked across at Tom.

Tom said, "I told you to stay on board."

"You told me", said the young man. "Now I tell you something. The cargo are hungry. The cargo are cold."

"The cargo will be in Birmingham tomorrow night. Till then, they can get on with it."

"The cargo are afraid. They are cold. They are dirty. You promised to look after them."

"I promised nothing except to take them to Birmingham. We can't move at night. If we started trying to work the locks in the dark we'd be investigated by the first police car that drove by. You know that."

As Tom said those last words he glanced briefly at Geoff. Then he looked back at the young man, challenging him, holding his eyes.

"The cargo can get no rest", the young man said. "They are dirty. There is nowhere to wash and no toilet."

"They can get out and go in the hedge, as long as no one sees them. They can go one at a time. You ought to be back there, organising it."

"Yes", said the young man bitterly. "They can get out and go in the hedge, one at a time, while the rain pours over them. Then in their wet clothes they can lie down on a lot of coal-sacks. This is looking after them?"

"No, it isn't looking after them, but it's taking them to Birmingham. Nobody warned me that they expected the Hilton. If they can find a better way, let them take it."

"It is too late for them to take it. They have paid all their money to you."

"Yes, they've paid me and I'm taking them to Birmingham. Now will you go back to the boat and calm them down and stay with them."

"No, I will not", said the young man. He

came a few steps further into the room.

"We're closed", said Ron. The young man ignored him and walked on till he was face to face with Tom.

"I will not go back to the boat. The cargo must be looked after."

"They're not starving. I took food on board."

"Cheese sandwiches. One-and-a-half each, in ten hours."

"All right, they'll be hungry when they get to Birmingham. Their friends can give them a good hot meal."

"Most of them have no friends. This is not humane."

"Look, we're closed", the landlord said. "You'd better go and discuss it somewhere else, Tom."

"No", said Tom, "I'm here and I'm staying here till I've eaten and rested. I've got responsibility for that boat. She's my boat, and if I don't look after her nobody else will. If you don't like the conditions", he said to the young man, "you didn't have to come along."

"I came along to look after the cargo. To see to their interests. Otherwise they would have nobody to speak for them. You treat them like animals."

"Would you mind", Tom said very slowly and distinctly, "not discussing our arrangements in front of people who could, and probably will, make a lot of trouble for us?"

Jackie said quietly, "There's only one person you could mean by that."

"Yes", he said. "But one's enough."

I looked at Geoff. He was smiling now.

"Look", Ron said wearily. "We're closed. I'll have to have everybody out."

"No, you won't", said Tom. "We're personal friends. You're closed but we're staying on for a sociable evening."

"Even me?" Geoff taunted.

"You most of all." Tom walked across to the door and closed it and shot the bolts, top and bottom. "I'm sorry if you wanted to go", he said to me politely.

"I'm spending the night here", I said.

"Oh. That's good then. Don't let us hold you if you feel like going to bed."

"All right", I said, but I was warm and comfortable where I was, and the spectacle was too interesting to tear myself away from.

"What'll you have, Ali?" Tom asked the young man.

"That's not my name."

"It is to me. You're all Ali to me. That way I don't have to know anybody's real name and I couldn't give them away to the wrong people."

"You can just call me you", said the young man.

"All right, you, have a whisky."

"I don't drink. I would like ginger beer and a sandwich."

"What kind of sandwich?" Jackie asked.

"Anything. No, not anything. Not ham. I am a Muslim."

"Have a pasty", she said. "We've just made them this evening. They're minced beef, is that all right for you?"

"Of course. I am not a Hindu."

Geoff suddenly gave a loud snigger. "I expect we would even manage Hindu food. I'll go and get some monkey-nuts if you like."

"I've told you to get out of here", said Ron sharply.

Geoff looked triumphantly at Ron, then at Tom, then at the newcomer.

"I'll get out when it suits Tom to open that door. I can wait. And when I do go, you know where I'm going, don't you? My car's outside. It'll take me about 12 minutes to drive to the police station. Of course if I went to a 'phone box I could have them here sooner. Just a tip-off, no names, no trouble. Just tell 'em where they could scoop up a boat-load of illegal immigrants being run into Birmingham."

"YOU SEE?" Tom said to the young man. "You see where you've landed us?"

"Don't blame him too much", said Geoff. He put his hand to his neck, straightening his tie, recovering from the ruffling he had had to suffer. He was on top now. "I was parked near Maresfield Bridge about six o'clock and I saw you come past. I knew you'd be making for here and I worked it out when you'd be likely to get here. I made up my mind to keep an eye on you. Oh, I'd have found out what you were carrying, whether this chap'd opened his mouth or not."

"You mean you'd have gone snooping round the boat, while I was in here."

"Not while you were in here. I'd have waited till you went back. I'm interested in what you do when you go back to the boat. What you do and who you take with you." He

looked across at Jackie. "I reckoned it was time we all came out in the open."

"All right", said Tom. "It's in the open now. I'm running a cargo of illegal immigrants into Birmingham. I shall get there tomorrow night and let them off in the dark. They'll be met by arrangement. They'll melt away into the city and nobody'll be able to trace them. I'll clean the boat for finger-prints and any other traces of a human cargo, and nobody'll be able to prove a thing. The police'd have to catch me red-handed to make out any kind of case. So all it needs is for no one to tell them between now and tomorrow night."

Geoff nodded triumphantly. "That's all it needs, yes."

"The only person who'd want to tell them is you. And if you tell them I'll kill you."

"No, you won't", said Geoff. He shook his head and gave that tilted smile. "You won't do that. You won't take the risk. There's too many witnesses and I'll see to it we don't find ourselves alone together. It's all just bluff, that is. And I shan't have to worry for a few years anyway. When it all comes out you'll go to prison. You'll do time for this, and serve you right. And if I feel worried about meeting you after you come out, I'll just leave this part of the country. It's not much cop anyway. I can go somewhere where you'll never find me if you look for the rest of your life."

Without seeming to hear him, Tom turned to Jackie. "Give Ali a pasty, sweetheart, and some ginger beer. And perhaps you could manage a few extra pasties, to go back to the cargo. I wanted to keep it quiet that I was carrying passengers, but now it's all come out we might as well get some mileage out of letting it be known."

"Don't you send food to them", Geoff said to Jackie. "It'll make you an accomplice. You'll be aiding and abetting his crime."

"Drop dead", she said and went out through the service door.

"Perhaps you're right", Tom said to Geoff. "Perhaps there's no way I can stop you blowing all this to the police. But there's one thing I can do, I can stop you going out of here till I've had time to think."

"If you're keeping me here by threats, that's another crime."

"Right. But if I'm going to prison anyway, what's the difference for a few more weeks on my sentence? And I need to think. So stay

where you are. If you try to get out I'll beat the breath out of your body."

Geoff got back on to his stool, and we all subsided. The whole situation seemed stalemated. There was a long silence. Ron picked up a half-pint glass with immense deliberation, carefully filled it with bitter from the pump and held it up to the light; then, apparently satisfied with its quality, he drank it.

I was looking at four men who had absolutely nothing to say to each other. Ron wanted to know as little as possible about the business Tom had got himself into; Tom had no motive for telling him anything; the dark young man felt himself in hostile company; and Geoff would have liked to taunt Tom some more but didn't dare. He just sat there looking contained and self-sufficient. And I was a fifth man with an inch of beer in a glass, sitting there watching it all happen.

Jackie came back with a plate on which there were two knives and four pasties. She put it down on the bar and added pepper and salt and paper napkins. Tom reached out for one of the pasties and took a large bite. The young man just stood there. Tom, chewing, looked at him and nodded towards the plate. The young man still stood there. After a moment Tom picked up the plate and handed it to him. Then he took a pasty and a paper napkin and started eating.

The two of them ate in silence until the four pasties were gone. Then the young man said to Jackie, "Did you say there were some more of those available?"

"We've made a couple of dozen", she said. "But they're for lunch-time tomorrow. We get a lot of lunch-time trade and we make the pasties the night before. You'll have to ask Ron if we can spare any for tonight. The ones I just served you were extras."

"Give them the whole two dozen", the landlord said. "We can ring up and get some pies in for tomorrow."

She nodded and went out.

"Thank you", the young man said to Ron. "Please let me know the cost of them."

"Settle it with Jackie."

THERE WAS another silence before Tom said, "Well, let's have a drink. What about a whisky all round?"

"We're closed", said Ron.

"OK, sell me a bottle and if a policeman comes in I'll say you sold it me before closing time. What're you trying to do, Ron, freeze me out?"

"Yes", said Ron. But he grinned, and reached down a bottle of whisky and some glasses. I counted silently as he put the glasses out. One, two, all right, that was Tom and himself. Three, four, five. That was everybody, even the dark young man, even me.

Even Geoff!

"Fill 'em up", said Tom genially. "You'll have one, friend?" he called over to me.

"Gladly", I said.

"And you?" Tom said to the young man.

"Yes, thank you", he said and gave a sudden flashing smile. "I am only a strict Muslim till closing time."

Ron poured a large measure into each glass, more than a double. In fact in pub terms you would have had to call it a sextuple. I went over for mine, said thank you to Tom, then went back to my ringside seat.

We all drank, meditatively. Even Geoff picked up his glass and sipped, squinting over the rim. And still no one spoke. Then Tom's hand moved to his back pocket and he brought out his wallet. He put it down on the bar and even from where I was sitting I could see it was enormously thick. Before our fascinated eyes he slid out a large wad of ten-pound notes. Casually, he slapped it down and it lay there on the bar, thick and threatening.

"Prices have gone up, Tom", said the landlord, looking down at the chunk of money, "but they haven't gone up that much."

"There's three hundred there", said Tom casually. "It's what I'm getting for the job. They trust me, so they paid me in advance."

"What's the idea, flashing it about?"

"I want Geoff here to get a good look at it."

Geoff stirred uneasily and said, "Why me? I knew you must be getting a fat profit else you wouldn't be doing it."

The young man was holding his whisky-glass tightly and looking from one to the other.

"Get a good look at that money, Geoff", said Tom in that light, smooth tone. "There's a hundred for you if you keep your mouth shut for a week."

Geoff drew in his breath and said, "Why a week?"

"The cargo'll be dispersed by then. They'll

have their heads down and their tracks well covered. Then you can talk as much as you like."

The young man said, "That would spoil future operations."

"There aren't going to be any future operations. This is a one-off job. I told you that."

"You did", said the young man. "But I thought you might change your mind when you found out how easy it was. There can't be many cargoes that pay as well as that."

"There are no cargoes that pay as well as that. Especially cargoes that walk on and walk off."

"If they are in a condition to walk off", said the young man bitterly. "They are probably getting fever in that unheated boat. They come from a warm country."

Geoff put in, "They should have stayed there, shouldn't they?"

They both ignored him and Tom said, "Their body heat'll warm the space they're in. And they're out of the rain." He turned back to Geoff and said, "There's a hundred quid in it if you keep your mouth shut."

"In advance?"

"Of course not. You'd take the money and go straight to the law. You can have it at the end of a week."

Geoff laughed scornfully. "Yes, at the end of a week I could whistle for it. Once you were in the clear."

"Ron'll hold it", said Tom. "You'll put a hundred quid in the safe and give it to Geoff when I telephone and say so, won't you?"

"No", said Ron. "I don't want anything to do with it."

In the silence, it seemed to me that I heard Tom draw in his breath ready to speak, to start trying to persuade Ron to change his mind. But he let it out again without speaking. Ron was so obviously not going to change his mind. He stood there behind the bar, quite motionless. Only his eyes travelled, just once from Tom's face to Geoff's and back again.

Jackie came in with a deep basket, covered with a clean white cloth.

"These are the pasties", she said to the young man. "I put them in this to keep warm. There's one or two other things there that they might be glad of, toilet paper and that. I'd like the basket back some time, but if you don't get a chance it won't matter. Have it as a present."

"I will send it back whatever happens", he

said. "I appreciate your kindness."

Geoff's flat voice broke in, "She's just doing what the boss tells her."

"I appreciate the boss's kindness as well", said the young man. He turned his large brown eyes on Geoff for an instant, and they had no expression in them.

RON NODDED towards the pile of money on the bar and said, "Better put that folding stuff away, Tom. It makes me nervous having three hundred quid lying about as if it was yesterday's newspaper."

"As far as our friend Geoff's concerned", said Tom, "it is yesterday's newspaper. The offer is closed." He picked up the banknotes and put them away, stuffing them carelessly into his worn leather wallet.

"As far as your friend Geoff is concerned," said Geoff from his stool, "it was never open. A hundred quid wouldn't stop me from doing what I'm going to do. No, nor a thousand."

"I don't think you gave it enough of a chance, Geoff", said the landlord. "I don't think you thought about it enough. Look, I don't want to aid and abet anything bent, but that's a very fair offer from Tom. A hundred nicker for doing nothing. And tax-free. If you're in about the same tax bracket as me, which I suppose you are, that's the equivalent of a hundred and thirty quid in your hand."

"If it comes to that I don't suppose Tom's got any plans to pay tax on this three-hundred bribe he's getting", said Geoff. "He might just as well—he won't need the money where he's going."

"Look at it this way, Geoff", said Ron. He put his elbows on the bar and leaned forward seriously. "Forget about wanting to do Tom over, and imagine some old auntie had died and left you a bit in her will. A hundred and thirty quid, just in your hand, not budgeted for, no need to spend it on the household expenses. Well, let's say you go out and buy a nice present for the wife. A new hat or a nice pair of gloves. To make a lovely sweet atmosphere in the home."

"Leave my bloody wife out of it."

"Or perhaps just a slap-up dinner for two, with a bottle of wine, somewhere where you can dance. Recapture the old thrill of courting days."

"I've told you, leave my—"

"All right, so you spend twenty quid on her. That leaves you, using this after-tax reckoning, with a hundred and ten to play with. I know you're fond of your car. Keep it in first-class nick. I've often heard you talking in here with the car club types. What's his name, that fellow you know from Leamington, a salesman, Len, is it?"

"What's it matter what his—"

"Now you imagine yourself going into a customising garage with a hundred and ten quid to spend. It's not the earth, but they could do you a nice little job for that."

"I've no intention of bloody—"

"It's a Cortina, isn't it? Well, I know a chap whose car looks a real treat now. Smartest job on the road. You know what they did, they—"

"I don't care a fuck what they did!"

"Watch your language, please, in front of Jackie. It was a two-door model. Well, they started out by fitting Ghia trim right through. Then they flared the wheel arches and put spoilers on. Looks smashing now. People stare at it on the road, and whenever he parks it he gets a crowd round."

Geoff's face twisted with fury. His suspicion that the landlord was baiting him had now flared into a certainty. "Belt up about it", he said in a choking voice. "Just belt up and leave me alone."

"That's not all they did, of course", Ron went on evenly. "They put oversize rear wheels on. Fourteen-inch Minilites. They left the front wheels standard. They're thirteen, you know. It's the same as your car. And to top it off, you know what they fitted?"

"I'm telling you once and for all, I don't—"

"Thrush sidepipes", said the landlord impressively. "Makes it look like a real hot-rod."

Geoff slowly dismounted from his stool. He looked from one face to another: Tom's grinning; Ron's grave and earnest; the young man's, watchful and tense; Jackie's expressionless; mine, buried in a pint mug with only my eyes squinting up at him.

"I'm glad you've started taking the mickey", he said at last, speaking quietly, struggling to keep his voice calm. "It'll make things easier. Because I'm going to make a lot of trouble. You can't trap me in here for ever. Sooner or later I'm going out of here to tell what I know."

Not just about Tom and this load of Pakkis or whatever they are. I'm going to—"

"Ali", said Tom suddenly to the young man. "Better take these supplies down to the boat. You can cheer the cargo up. Tell 'em they'll be all right."

"All right, hell", said Geoff venomously. "I'll have every single one of 'em turned round and sent back."

"Take the grub down, Ali", said Tom. He walked across and unbolted the door. "They'll be feeling a bit bedraggled, so a nice hot pasty all round is just what they want. In twenty-four hours they'll be in Birmingham, free men. Tell 'em not to worry."

"You can't tell men like that not to worry", said the young man. He bent down and picked up the basket. Holding it in his arms, he stood and looked at us all for a moment. "Their worries will never end. They came here in the first place because they could not stand their worries at home. Now they get here and they have worries that they will be found and sent back. They have worries about getting a job, and when they have a job and somewhere to live they have worries about how they are going to be treated. Some of them have their bones broken in the street at night and go to hospital. They lie in the hospital and they worry about what will happen when they come out." He walked towards the door. "If I were to tell them not to worry", he said over his shoulder, "I would be one big bloody liar."

He was gone, and it was still raining.

"Well", said Tom to the empty floor-space, "what the hell can I do about it?"

"I know what I'm going to do about it", said Geoff. He had been sitting like a coiled spring, but now he suddenly launched himself off his stool and towards the open door. But not suddenly enough. Tom's foot flashed out, Geoff was tripped, down on all fours, Tom was standing over him. That large right fist hauled Geoff up by the scruff of his neck.

"Behave yourself", said Tom, panting slightly. "Your turn may come, but it won't come just yet."

He nodded towards that stool at the end of the bar. Slowly, Geoff went over to it, smoothing down his jacket, and resumed his place as if nothing had happened. Tom went across and without haste slid the two bolts of the door back into place.

AT THAT MOMENT Mrs Ron came in from behind the bar. She gave us all a cool look, and I could see she knew perfectly well that something irregular was happening. But she stayed aloof from it. Probably they had a long-standing agreement: Ron coped with everything that happened in the licensed part of the building, and she coped with everything else. She just gave us all that calm, searching look and then asked Ron when he would be coming through for his supper.

"I'll be through in about five minutes, love", he said shortly. She went back and he said to Tom, "That gives me just five minutes to get all this sorted out. Just what are you going to do? Stay in the bar all night?"

"If I have to."

The amiability had gone from Ron's face. "Tom, I've had enough of this. I've always been glad to see you here, and I'll be glad to see you again some time. But what I want now is for you to move along. Come back when you're into something legal."

"I'm sorry it's bothered you, Ron. It's not my fault that you ever found out about it. I wanted this to be an ordinary visit. A sociable drink and all good friends together."

"Well, it hasn't worked out like that. And it's too late to pick the little pieces up now. I'm going to have my supper, and then I'm coming back into the bar to clear up for the night. When I do, I want you to be gone." He turned to the girl. "There's supper for you, Jackie, if you want it."

"Not tonight, thanks, Ron. I'm not hungry."

He looked at her briefly, then went out.

We all stayed where we were and looked straight to the front. The fire was beginning to die down, its brightness covered with soft grey ash. Outside the window the rain still splashed down. I wondered how the cargo were getting on. I could imagine them wolfing down the warm pasties, crouching there in the dark of the hold, with the well-dressed man, their leader, steadying and encouraging them in their own language. And I imagined them taking the toilet paper Jackie had sent them, and crouching down under the wet hedge. Slight-boned, patient men, accustomed to living like birds: picking up such crumbs as chance dropped in their way. I wondered if they had clean water to drink on the boat.

And here in the bar, Geoff sat on his stool like a motionless, poisonous insect waiting to

bite; Tom stood in front of the bar, solid on his legs, head erect, looking at nothing; Jackie put her hands on the bar and leaned slightly forward, her face thoughtful.

Finally she said, "What're you going to do, Tom? Have you any idea?"

"None in the world", he replied shortly.

"If you could get rid of these chaps you're carrying, you'd be in the clear. Why not just let them go?"

"If I could wave a magic wand and have them all in Timbuctoo, I'd be in the clear. But if I just turf them out now, they'll be picked up and one or other of them'll tell the police he was in a boat and give a description that'll lead to me."

"Where can you get rid of them?"

"Not till I get to Birmingham. In any case I've taken three hundred pounds to deliver them in Brum and I'm not going back on it. The poor sods have had enough to put up with already."

Geoff grimaced and said, "Don't tell me you're doing it out of kindness. Sympathy with our poor third-world brothers."

Tom moved a step towards him and said, "Speak to me one more time and I'll give you the going-over now that I'll probably have to give you later." He paused reflectively and said, "That might be the best thing anyway. I could break enough of your bones, and concuss you badly enough to put you in hospital, and anything you said would just be taken as delirium."

He looked so cool and businesslike, so ready to put the idea into operation, that I felt a reluctant admiration for the way Geoff kept calm and didn't seem as terrified as I would have been. He just looked straight back at Tom and said, "You won't do that. When the coppers come to my bedside to take a statement, they'll act on it whether I'm delirious or not. And what happens if you go too far and kill me? Jackie's a witness."

So am I, I thought with rising uneasiness.

JACKIE SPOKE now. "No, Tom, that's not the way. Listen, I've been thinking. Tell me this. What's the soonest you can get them off the boat? I mean, I know you've arranged to let them off in the middle of tomorrow night, but can you bring it forward at all?"

Tom drank, put his glass down, thought for a moment and then said, "Once we hit the outskirts of Brum I can start letting them go in twos and threes. Ali can pick out the ones who speak English and give them bus fare and tell them what to do. They can get into the centre of town by one route or another and Ali's organisation can see them all right from there. They won't attract attention if they don't go in a group. It'll take a hell of a lot of organising, but it's better than getting caught."

"Well, what's the least amount of time you can do with?"

He ruminated. "The earliest I could have the last of them off and the ship scrubbed up?"

"Yes, and to have thought of a reason for taking the boat up to Brum empty, in case the police do look you up."

He said admiringly, "You think of everything, don't you?" "No", she said bitterly. "I never think at all. I just keep one jump ahead, and not always that."

He was silent for a moment, looking at the floor. Then his head snapped upright and he said, "I could be ready for a police interrogation by six o'clock tomorrow evening."

"All right", she said.

"All right, how?"

Jackie straightened her back, took her hands off the bar, and looked at Geoff.

"There's a telephone in the passage behind this bar, Geoff."

"I know there is."

"Well, go to it. You've got a call to make."

His face had gone very white and tense. "What kind of call would that be?"

"To your wife."

"My . . ."

"Tell her you're ringing from some place a good long way away. You're putting through a big deal and it's taking a lot of rough arguing. You'll be at it all evening and start again in the morning. Go on, think of anything, only make it convincing. I expect you're quite good at telling lies that sound good. Tell her you'll be coming home not long after six tomorrow night."

Geoff said carefully, "And what am I going to be doing between now and six o'clock tomorrow?"

"You'll be with me." When he still looked uncomprehending, she added coolly, "In bed. Or out of it, just as you like."

Geoff swallowed hard. In his agitation he

got down from the stool. But he said nothing.

"Take it or leave it", she said. "It's what you've always wanted. Well, now you can have it. You won't get a second chance, I can tell you that."

"No", said Tom suddenly. His voice rang out like an explosion in the quiet bar. "No, Jackie."

With a sway of her supple hips she turned back to him. "Sorry, Tom. But you're going to have to stay out of this."

"You're not going to . . ." he stopped and jabbed at the air, meaninglessly. "Not with him. No. I won't have it."

"It's a bit late", she said, "to start telling me what you'll have and what you won't have."

His jaw-line hardened and he said, "We were pretty good friends once."

"No", she said with a small, tight shake of her head. "No, we weren't good friends. Being good friends is when you care about somebody. You didn't care about me."

He lifted his arms from his sides as if to make a gesture, then let them fall helplessly back.

"Get on that 'phone, Geoff", Jackie said, "We're going home together."

"I don't believe it", he said. "It's a trick."

"How can it be? If I don't make it worth your while to stay, you can go any time. But you'll give it a try. You'll ring up your wife and then come back with me. You know where I live, just in the village."

"Yes, and I also know that you live with your old mum. How can we have any fun with her in and out of the—"

"My old mum's away. She'll be gone all week. Her sister's very ill and Mum's gone to look after her. All the way down to Plymouth."

He still hesitated. "You'll get me there and lock me in or something. It's a plan you've cooked up with Tom."

"How could it be? You've been here all the time and you know I haven't been alone with Tom for a second. Besides", she added, "if you're locked in I'll be there too."

He seemed convinced by this thought. "I'll telephone", he said, and went through into the passage. Jackie silently opened the flap of the bar for him to pass.

When he had gone, there were just the three of us, and nobody seemed to have anything to

say. I looked at the fire. It was almost out now. I wanted to go to bed but was afraid of drawing attention to myself if I moved. They had obviously all forgotten about me, and I preferred it that way.

Then, in the silence, I heard the *ting* as Geoff put down the telephone. He had made the call, pacified his wife, and he was ready for a night with Jackie. A night, and the following day right through till evening, till Tom was safe. It would be the best thing that happened to him in his life. And yet I could not envy him.

His lop-sided face appeared at the service door, beside the bright row of bottles. "All right", he said. "Let's go."

"I'll get my coat", she said. "We'll go that way, there's no need for you to come back in the bar."

Geoff moved away. Before following him Jackie turned to Tom one more time. When she spoke her voice was very steady.

"Get on with it. Don't make any mistakes. I don't want to do this for nothing."

"I'll get on with it", he said quietly, almost as if talking to himself.

She turned and went out, closing the service door behind her. That left Tom and me. I kept very still. He reached for the whisky bottle, sloshed out a large glass, and tossed it down, tilting his head right back. Then he shook himself, like a dog after coming out of a river, and walked straight over to the door. With sharp, impatient movements he unbolted it, opened it, and was gone into the black down-pour.

I HAD FINISHED my drink, there was no longer any heat from the fire, and suddenly I thought of the chilly morning, the wet towpath and the long lonely walk.

The service door opened and Ron came in. Without looking at me he began, slowly, to clear up the bar and close down for another night. I said goodnight to him. He answered as if he was thinking of something else. There was no mention, now, of that cosy after-hours meal with him and Mrs Ron. We all seemed to have gone beyond such things. I wasn't hungry anyway.

I went up to the bedroom and switched on the light. Then I remembered that my back-

pack was still down in that glassed-over porch. Everything I needed was in it.

I went downstairs. The lights were already out in the bar and Ron and his wife were sealed off in their own living quarters. I suddenly felt lonely.

The porch door was not locked. I couldn't find a light-switch but there was enough light coming in. It came, I now saw, from the headlights of a car that was parked a little distance from the house. Peering through the glass, I saw that it was Geoff's car. He was sitting behind the wheel, and he had the engine running.

Then, before I could get my backpack and clear out, I heard footsteps. Jackie's light, quick steps and Tom's heavier tread. She was going towards the car but he was holding her. He drew her in close to the door of the bar. I kept very still.

"Let me go", she said.

"Not just yet. I need to talk to you."

"No, you don't. It's over."

I froze. Fortunately my spread-out raincoat, still hanging there, was between me and them. If I came out now, Tom would see me as an eavesdropper and take out his frustration and rage by giving me a good thumping. I wasn't sure of this, but the mere possibility of it kept me very, very still.

"If it's over", he said, "why are you doing this?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"Well, help me. Tell me and I'll try to understand."

"You can't", she said. "You're not made like that. You don't see other people. You don't care if you hurt them."

"How can you say that?"

"Because it's bloody true. You came through here and picked me up. You turned the charm on and got me down to the boat after hours. Every time you came through I was waiting for you. Must have been very nice for you. You had me just where you wanted me. A bit of fun and a bit of comfort—always on tap, like the beer, wasn't I?"

"No. It wasn't like that. I liked you. I really liked you."

"You liked me", she said slowly and venomously, "the way you'd like a steak and kidney pie. Something to get your teeth into. And I was crazy about you. I used to live for the times you came here. In between, I just

wasn't alive. And you never wrote, never sent a message, never told me when you were coming. You just showed up. Then when you stopped coming, I had to hear about it from other people. Somebody told me you were going into the charter business, and I thought, *why doesn't the bastard write me a letter?*"

"I'm sorry", he said. "Letters, well... I don't write letters much. And I thought I'd be seeing you sometime."

"Yes, *sometime*. And I'd be waiting, and you could snap your fingers and I'd come down to the boat. Let me go. Take your hands off me. Geoff'll get tired of waiting and he'll go to the police."

"No, he won't. He'll never get tired of waiting for you. I just can't understand why you want to go to him."

"I *don't* want to. I hate him. I wouldn't give him a drink of water if he was dying."

"Well, why? why?"

"I've told you, you wouldn't understand."

"That's not good enough. I won't let you go till you *try* to make me understand."

"I never mattered to you", she said. She was crying now. "I never mattered at all. I was just a —"

And she used a word I was surprised to hear from her.

"Jackie, don't say that. Of course you were more."

"No, I wasn't. Don't tell me your bloody lies. I never mattered to you. Well, it's over, I'll never see you again, but before I go out of your life I'll do one thing that makes me important. You'll remember me because I'm the reason you're walking about free instead of going to prison. You'll think of that when you don't think of anything else."

"Jackie, you've got it all wrong—really I —"

"Let me go, damn you", I heard her say. There was a tearing sound and her footsteps hurried away. I pictured Tom standing there with a piece of her overcoat in his hand. The collar, or perhaps a sleeve.

The car drove away. I stood as still as the motionless, hanging shape of my raincoat, a motionless bat-shape in the faint starlight. I thought if Tom saw me now he would kill me.

Then his footsteps, too, moved slowly away. After a long time I picked up my backpack and went into the bar and upstairs. As I did so I heard Ron moving about on the ground

floor, locking the doors. The day was over.

I lay down in bed, but it was a long time before I could go to sleep. The action I had been watching, an uninvited and unnoticed spectator, was completed. But there were no comforting screen credits to flow upward before my eyes. It had been real: I could not switch off and watch that diminishing white

centre dwindling into darkness.

I lay with my eyes open and thought of Tom going back to the boat. I thought of the cargo. They would have finished the pasties and perhaps now they were sleeping. I tried to think of Jackie, and what it was like for her with Geoff, but at that point my mind switched off and I just lay there listening to the rain.

Making a Sponge

Not one pinch of love, she thought, was needed,
 (Whatever the ads said). To keep the rules
 With a quick hand, and, sometimes, a patient one,
 Was sufficient to enchant the stolid ounces.
 Machines would help (their anger wasn't real)
 —A pair of bladed fists pounding the yolks
 To a high, pale foaming. Odd, she thought,
 How the house had changed, as if she cooked that too,
 Its quiet flecked with the talk of steel and china,
 The faint hiss of the sieve, the scratch and sigh
 Of buttered paper. Someone coming home
 Would taste the sweetening warmth in every room
 —But it wasn't magic. She must keep the rules
 Still, clear a new space, and count in minutes.
 Soon she'd crouch, a midwife, with her clothed hand
 Into the glowing dark. She'd lightly tap
 The golden disks from their tins
 And feel their moisture lift like dying souls
 And float to the top of the kitchen. Only when
 Their fragile skins were cold beneath her palm
 Could she pile jam and cream, and flourish icing,
 Architect of a dazzling Winter Palace.
 The mob would bring it down with peasant shouts
 And blunt forks, of course. And she'd play God,
 Not asking for a crumb of her creation.
 She had acted without hope, simply kept
 The rules, a quick hand, patience
 —Though years later, a casual child might praise
 The memory of that skill, and call it art.

Carol Rumens

David Riesman

Egocentrism

Is the American Character Changing?

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS or so American social critics and commentators have noted what they regard as a dramatic growth of self-centredness, or narcissism, especially among our reasonably well-educated, affluent, and cosmopolitan young. "Young", in the American idiom, sometimes extends into a person's late thirties and forties. Because of the artificiality of this attenuation, some observers have talked of our affinity for a protracted adolescence. This protraction may tend to shield our pseudo-youths from obligations that were assumed by earlier generations at equivalent ages, such as making serious long-range commitments, or having appropriate regard for their obligations to the past and future.

Among the observers who have noted the trend, Peter Marin and Tom Wolfe have referred to our era as a "Me Decade." Psychoanalysts and other clinicians have displayed divided opinions about the nature of narcissism observed in their patients and in clinical work, and the extent to which pathological manifestations could be extrapolated to a wider population. Among academics and intellectuals, Christopher Lasch has been perhaps the most influential commentator in his best-selling book, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Richard Sennett, while not relying on the term "narcissism", has also written an influential discussion of the growth of privatism: *The Fall of Public Man: The Boundaries of Change* (1977).

THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS whether a substantial change has occurred in American national character. Before discussing this possibility, I would like to make clear the terms of my discourse.

"Egoism" would probably be technically preferable to "egocentrism." Egocentrism, in its technical psychological meaning, commonly refers to the cognitive psychology of Piaget and to a particular

stage in the development of the child: the point where the child must learn to distinguish what is "out there" and not under his control from the child himself. "Egoism" would not have these technical connotations, but is a less common term; it should be clear that I am using "egocentrism" in its ordinary, non-technical sense. "Egocentrism" has the additional advantage for my purposes of reminding us of "ethnocentrism", where a group or nation sees everything from its own moral or strategic perspective. I avoid the old-fashioned synonym of "selfishness", because no one so far as I know praises selfishness. But egoism or egocentrism is now widely peddled as a therapeutic means to encourage self-assertion; and people buy books and attend seminars in which they are encouraged to discover and promote their own feelings and wishes—in some manuals and seminars almost as if this were an ideal or goal in life.

The term "narcissism" also has interesting parallels with egocentrism. Narcissism is derived from the Greek myth about the beautiful youth Narcissus, who spent his time staring at the image of himself in water, and eventually fell in and drowned. The classically educated Sigmund Freud liked to apply classical metaphors. He wrote one of his early essays on the origins and qualities of the narcissistic personality type. Freud noted that someone who had (like himself) been the family's oldest son and mother's favourite could possess a kind of self-confidence and even self-admiration which was appealing to others, but which could become pathological in extreme cases.

MEN WITH SUCH self-love and élan are not a novel phenomenon. They have figured prominently in the public life of my own lifetime. Two of our Presidents who attracted millions of followers outside as well as inside the United States exhibited narcissism which might be termed pathological.

For example, Theodore Roosevelt was a boy weakling who turned into a flamboyant "Rough Rider." He manifested an extraordinary degree of narcissism. Roosevelt was our first overseas imperialist: he wanted to strut on a world stage. Overestimating his very great appeal, he failed, after serving nearly two full terms as President, to compel his chosen successor, William Howard Taft, to do his bidding. He then failed in 1912, through the Bull Moose Party (notice the egocentric name!), to recapture the Presidency. The degree of narcissism of someone like Theodore Roosevelt is so great that no defeat or frustration can be accepted; and during the First World War he drifted into a bitter, chauvinistic old age.

Primarily because, in his vanity, Roosevelt split the Republican Party, the Presidency fell to an even more narcissistic man, Woodrow Wilson. Wilson had the dream—though he knew little of foreign affairs—that by entering the First World War on the side of the Allies, he could determine the shape of the post-War world and bring perpetual peace. This was a fantasy of omnipotence that his "courtiers" did not try to shake. The narcissist of Wilson's stripe is apt to think only of what he can do and not of what enemies (in Wilson's case, both domestic and foreign) are able to do.

Another example, General Douglas MacArthur, had similar qualities—energy, élan, and an insensitivity to the potential of enemies and critics. MacArthur, preoccupied with his own plans, found it hard to attend to the plans of his adversaries. As a result his bombers were caught on the ground at Clark Field after Pearl Harbour had already occurred, just as in Korea he refused to heed the warnings of the Chinese that they would enter the Korean War if he crossed the 38th parallel. Filled with self-confidence, admired by millions, he failed when dismissed by President Truman to arouse the country as he had hoped to do.

All of these examples in the end met failure: narcissism was their weakness, as it was in the myth of Narcissus.

What Has Changed?

SELFISHNESS is as old as human history, and its extreme example in narcissism is evident in many noted American leaders, some of them of exceptional gift and distinction (Thomas Jefferson is a good illustration). What is it, then, that has led to the current preoccupation with the topic? Has anything really changed?

The preoccupation partly may be an illusion created by the mass media. We have become a much more national society in recent years, thanks to the mass media and to the far greater proportion of the population who have had some college education. Trends, or ephemeral fads, which are noted in California or in Eastern cosmopolitan centres, come to be regarded as norms for American life as a whole.

Our nationalised society—or many sectors of it—has become increasingly urbanised, secularised, transient, and liberated from traditional bondages and parochial or communal ties. These changes have made us prone to ignore those sectors of American life, in parts of the South, in rural areas, and elsewhere, where old-time evangelical religion is strong. Instead, we notice the new religious cults, often highly authoritarian, which fulfil for some empty people the needs for commitment and sense of community. Furthermore, since World War II we have become a more egalitarian society. Classes and groups formerly fatalistic, if not deferential—many Blacks, women not in the topmost aristocratic or bohemian strata—are all demanding the accoutrements which they see on television possessed by people like themselves but with more goods and leisure. These expanding aspirations do not help maintain a sense of rootedness. They both increase our vulnerability to media-based distortions, and stimulate our needs for recognition and dramatic gratification.

ANOTHER TECHNOLOGICAL development, namely the discovery and spread of relatively safe birth-control devices, loosened the previous generally prevailing tie between sex and parenthood. And this has raised levels of aspirations in many ways. In the past, many women in the working and middle classes worked in urban jobs—they have always worked on farms—but in an earlier day many of these activities were either temporary (school and college teachers, for example, until marriage) or part-time jobs in stores or offices.

Full-time jobs relegated their holders to spinsterhood—a condition made more tolerable for members of religious communities. What birth control has done has been to free some parents from having to make sacrifices to rear children, as well as allowing many to space the children they do have in an optimal way. For still other families, a conscious choice is made to relegate those children one has to concededly inadequate caretakers so that the parents can maintain their standard of living in the face of inflation, or even increase it.

Some of the ideology of the women's movement has encouraged both sexes to avoid choosing between adequate parental care for the younger children on the one hand, and a higher standard of living and occupational achievement on the other. This avoidance has made it necessary for many young males and females to engage in a process of elaborate and strenuous juggling of roles—as they try to determine a mix of career, marriage, and parenting that is appropriate for their lives. And, in this arduous process, they must simultaneously identify potential employers (or professions) and mates who will mesh smoothly with their goals. Unfortunately, in all likelihood the husbands will talk a better game of helping with care of the home and of children than in fact their future performance will justify. And not many men are able to tolerate spouses who achieve greater occupational success than they do (whatever their lip service to “liberation”). As a result, it is no wonder that in many of these instances the parents split. Hence the children are apt themselves to feel guilty for having caused or at least not prevented the split; and one or both parents feel guilty, especially after the custody battles that often ensue. It becomes important, in an era characterised by Philip Reiff as “the triumph of the therapeutic”, for these guilt-ridden persons to discover consensual ways to excuse or alleviate their guilt.

HENCE THE TRULY DRAMATIC CHANGE has been, in my judgment, in the growth of many different forms of public approval for egocentric behaviour. While my conclusions in this particular are not infallible, I have lived a long life which has kept me in touch with many older and younger members of our upper-middle classes. In this era people boast about “*doing their own thing*”, where once they might have been ashamed of such self-serving conduct and hidden it from others.

Egocentricity Versus Hypocrisy

IN MANY PARTS of our more visible social order, hypocrisy is now regarded as a worse vice than egocentricity.

But hypocrisy is, essentially, a private wrong. It describes our concealed failures to live up to our professed aspirations. Egocentricity, more often, is a public act—it involves the conspicuous pursuit of self-gratification, usually at the evident expense of others. Thus, we will chastise the “hypocrite”, who

goes through the form of living out a loveless marriage or holds an unsatisfying job for the sake of the children, and admire the egotist who skips his (or her) responsibilities in pursuit of self-fulfilment. Similarly, many sexually active boys and men are egocentric enough to fail to consider the consequences for women, especially teenage girls, of possible pregnancy; indeed, the women's liberation movement has made some men conclude that taking care against pregnancy is only the woman's affair. We have entered an era in which the cult of what is supposed to be candour is widely prevalent: in other words, “*let it all hang out*.” But what often emerges in encounter groups and similar settings is encouragement to display a lowest-common-denominator level of selfishness, sexual aggression, and verbal abuse. This is supposedly “*the real me*.”

Before the 1960s, when privacy and more humane codes of social conduct were in force, hypocrisy had certain benevolent uses. People were protected from “temptation” by codes that were reinforced by refinement of feelings and discrimination in taste. But now such behaviour would be considered élitist and false and the result of class privilege.

THIS CHANGE in what is openly avowed, and what is repressed, affects and reinforces conduct itself. Words have power. Thus, if we are continuously told that everyone else is out for Number One, we begin to believe it. Then, we will be prepared to behave similarly—something one can observe in the way people drive in cities like Boston where, expecting aggression from the other driver, civility actually becomes hazardous. Moreover, when egocentric behaviour is not repressed but paraded, those tempted by it will follow suit; and the conduct will become more widespread.

At the same time, one can predict that general resistance to these destructive trends will begin to appear. The very discussion of the issue in the writings I referred to at the outset suggests that counter-movements may be under way. Still, the egocentricity of the present era, in terms of under-socialised and neglected children growing into adult and wilful people, will have long-term consequences.

The Law as an Example

AS A former practising lawyer. I can buttress this pessimistic generalisation with a concrete

example. Lawyers have always played a large role in shaping the history of our American society. John Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe were all lawyers. However, our Founding Fathers, despite their legal training, were sensitive to the importance of civic virtue, and of the centrality of values such as self-restraint, compromise, and cooperative action. Plutarch's *Lives*, with its stress on discipline and the virtues of tradition, was one of their favourite works.

Unfortunately, it seems fair to say that in general in the contemporary era we have created an imperial bar. These practitioners have identified and cultivated a number of courts and judges who are susceptible to sharing their ideologies and egocentrism. As a result, these courts exercise a form of omniscient arrogance, and they decide the most complex "cost benefit trade-offs" on the basis of what lawyers (and their occasional social-science witnesses) tell them in briefs and oral arguments. When my collaborators and I wrote *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) we expressed concern about the role of "veto groups." But we were not then thinking about the enormous enhancement—still in the future—of legislation which permitted litigants (even minorities of one) to stop large projects and to foster a climate of vicious litigiousness. Our legislatures (largely composed of lawyers) and our courts have constantly widened the circle of those entitled to sue anybody for anything, either on a contingent fee basis or by securing some Ralph Naderite lawyer or law firm (often assisted by public funds). To be sure, the public interest is sometimes served. But, in my opinion, these developments have generally been socially unproductive.¹

THE DEFICIENCIES of the heightening of an already litigious and adversarial process become more apparent if one compares the United States with a non-litigious and non-adversarial culture, such as Japan, or one, such as the United Kingdom, which keeps courtroom lawyers (and their egos) under strict control. These comparisons demonstrate the degree to which recent American developments

have supplied plaintiffs, counsels, and judges with powerful egocentric reinforcement. And, furthermore, one can also recognise that the developments, themselves, have been partly triggered by the desires of certain social classes to change public policies so as to increase their opportunities to engage in the gratification of their egos. It is true that the vehicle of the lawsuit is more civilised than the duel, but its outcome is more rationalised than rational.

I would be happier if similar aggressive energies could be directed toward entrepreneurship, into starting things, even risky and potentially hazardous ones, rather than stopping or slowing them down, or tying them up in regulations so costly as to inhibit all but the most well-heeled. Unfortunately, encouraging and engaging in creative entrepreneurship takes higher levels of psychic strength and general talent than are possessed by many egocentric litigators.

In sum, the mind-set of a society usually has an effect visible in its day-to-day life. The virus of egocentrism has aggravated many of the worst tendencies in the legal profession, and has increased the social and economic burdens on all of us.

Evidence of Change

IN A COUNTRY as large and diverse as the United States, many contradictory tendencies may be under way simultaneously. However, one can still draw some conclusions as to behaviour, if not always as to motives, from aggregate statistics. Edward A. Wynne has collected data indicating a lessened willingness on the part of students to make sacrifices for one another, and a general increase in inconsiderate behaviour *vis-à-vis* peers.

For example, there has been a tremendous increase in youth homicide among both white and black males; in addition to the rise in teenage pregnancies already referred to, there has been a rise in venereal disease despite available medical remedies (indicative of the willingness of partners to infect each other); there has also been a very large rise—and of course I am talking here about rates, not absolute figures—in suicides among young men, and increasingly, among young women—a rise which Wynne interprets as reflecting the situation of people who are neither being cared for nor have responsibilities or care for others. He has also noted time-series data from such selective colleges as Haverford, indicating less willingness on the part of students at least to declare that they would be

¹ There is irony here in the fact that a number of the lawyers who believe themselves devoted to the public interest, or what lawyers call *cui bono* practice, would be astonished to be considered egocentric. They see themselves as fighting on behalf of "powerless people" against an "entrenched bureaucracy" or "corporate system." For one of the best illustrations of how these motives operate in practice, with the lawyers seeking the *réclame* that comes from a successful class action suit, see Harry Brill, *Why Organizers Fail* (1971).

willing to accept blame in order to protect fellow students.

Lansing Lamont in his book, *Campus Shock*, recounts what students, faculty, and administrators in cosmopolitan residential colleges already know: in the unchaperoned dormitories, students commonly treat one another with indifference, at best, and at worst, victimise each other through vandalism and theft. Hi-fi sets may be played around the clock. Students with roommates will bring their lovers to bed with them, leaving the unaffiliated room-mate to sleep on the couch and accept the situation with as good grace as possible. (The room-mate discomfited by such behaviour is unlikely to complain, for fear of being thought prudish, "uptight", or lacking in tolerance.) Meanwhile the "responsible" adults (faculty and administrators), who were at first driven out by protesting students demanding liberation in the 1960s, have in many instances made a tacit treaty with the student avant-garde. The treaty commits the adults to practise non-benign neglect towards their confused charges. In exchange, the faculty members also can do *their* own thing. Indeed, in some cases the faculty's thing consists of sexual relations with students, now sometimes flagrant rather than secret.

THESE CONCLUSIONS of Lamont, and my own personal observations, are supported by the findings of a 1978 survey of recently graduated post-graduate psychology students (reported in *The American Psychologist*) and similar students who received their degrees 21 or more years ago. 25% of the recent female graduates reported having had sexual contact with their male advisers during their schooling; the comparable figure for the older graduates was 5%. We should keep in mind that these "advisers" have a great deal of say in determining the academic success of their graduate students.

THE BABY BOOM crowded colleges and universities with students who had to compete with each other intensely. This heightened competition led students to develop predictably egocentric behaviour. This behaviour also deprived adults of belief in the legitimacy of their authority. Indeed, parents and teachers alike feared that to stand in the way of the youthful peer groups would cut them off completely from their children or students. Furthermore, in some cases, the adults secretly envied the seeming freedom of the young—and I say "seeming

freedom" because the young often concluded that they had little real freedom to behave in ways other than the visible fashion prevailing among their fellows.

AN UNOBTUSIVE (and unintrusive) measure of the degree to which individuals have turned inward upon themselves, rather than taking part in the civic life around them, may be found in the figures on voter turnout. (Philip Converse of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan and Walter Dean Burnham of the Political Science Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have commented on this development.) The results emphasise the significance of the decline in party identification among those who consider themselves, if voters at all, "independent" voters. Despite the intellectual prestige attached to such independence, these citizens are generally *less* politically knowledgeable and *less* committed to representative democracy than party members.

It is widely known that in no other democratic country is voter turnout so low as it is in the United States. In 1976, Jimmy Carter won the votes of about one-fourth of the eligible electorate; only 54% went to the polls. Turnouts in off-year congressional, state, and local elections are even lower. Although it has been traditional in America for the young to vote less frequently than their elders, it was a disappointment to many who had campaigned for the 18-year-old franchise that there was extremely limited responsiveness particularly among college students, for whom arrangements had been made to register and vote at their academic institutions.

Yet here also it is necessary to take note of countervailing instances of youth engagement and commitment. Our recognition of this theme could begin with the Southern segregationist youth who vocally supported George Wallace and engaged in civil disobedience against efforts to integrate schools and colleges. These activities were followed in turn by youthful civil rights (and later by anti-Viet Nam) activists. And there were also young people who campaigned actively for Eugene McCarthy and, briefly, Robert Kennedy in 1968. The belief prevails today that the college students are almost entirely inactive politically and communally, except when it comes to protests against increases in tuition or overcrowding in dormitories or monotonous food services. But in the selective colleges there remains a group of white as well as Black students who can be mobilised in support of South African divestiture or any other issue involv-

ing race. There is also a strong movement for environmental protection, notably in the anti-nuclear power demonstrations and sit-ins—an unconscious kind of social-class combat with the less well-to-do, who would also like amenities and protection against hazards, but for whom jobs and standard consumer goods, taken for granted by the affluent, are a first priority.

Furthermore, on some of the most sophisticated campuses, one finds students active in social service work, in mental hospitals, or in tutoring handicapped or semi-literate children or fellow-students. And, of course, one finds evangelists for various traditional religions as well as for cults who are seeking to save not only their own souls but those of others. Finally, there are still many cohesive liberal arts colleges, especially evangelical ones, where students do not conform to the self-serving behaviour advocated by the “therapeutic” books and workshops. In most parts of the country, egalitarianism has virtually eliminated deference, while egocentrism has tended to erode civility as well. But in a few enclaves, civility certainly survives and, at least in formal terms, a moderate deference *vis-à-vis* authority.

Distinguishing Individualism from Egocentrism

IN ORDER TO COMPREHEND what changes in American values are ephemeral and what may be more permanent, it is necessary to consider characteristic American values in historical perspective. From the Puritan divines of New England to the great religious revivals of the 18th and early 19th centuries, we Americans have charged each other with “materialism” and “greed”; and all but the most penetrating observers from abroad have also frequently levelled this accusation at Americans. (In some instances, this is a demonstration of envy—a virtually worldwide trait that sometimes plays upon our seemingly endemic supply of guilt.) But in comparison with peasants and merchants in most of the world, with Italian industrialists or Spanish-American tin barons, Americans of comparable rank have been considerably less greedy, less “materialistic” than many of their accusers.

Once Americans have reached a certain plateau of affluence, the hunger for further material acquisition is muted by our pervasive egalitarianism. The egalitarianism allows virtually everyone in the society to seek affluence, rather than to restrict the

search by fatalism or the feeling that one must “keep one’s place.” It is from among the scions of the already well-to-do that have come some of the sharpest attacks against materialism—indeed, against America itself. In recent decades, as already suggested, it is from these affluent anti-materialists that the devotees of limits to growth, the environmentalists, and those whose desire it is to travel without cumbersome possessions are recruited.

TOCQUEVILLE, coming to America in 1831, demonstrated the acuity of his vision by observing that Americans were not unusually materialistic. He coined the term “*individualism*” to characterise what he saw as a calm spirit of individual enterprise, which was at the same time capable of collective action. He carefully distinguished individualism from egoism, noting that individualism was not necessarily greedy. More important, he saw that Americans, though individualistic in many private pursuits, were remarkably capable of combining in voluntary associations to pursue collective interests, including such reforms as the temperance movements, prison reform, and the anti-slavery movements.

These voluntary institutions filled a vital need in the post-feudal and expanding American society, where European entities such as parishes and responsible and identifiable ruling groups did not exist. This ability to form voluntary associations, which Tocqueville so admired, was seen by him as providing intermediary units between the isolated individualist and the potentially tyrannical majority in an otherwise levelled and egalitarian society. In other words, without this associative tendency, Americans would be either a collection of unrelated anomic persons, or a homogeneous and demagogically controlled superstate.

In Tocqueville’s day, America was still overwhelmingly rural. Most farmers lived, not in European-style villages, but on free-standing farms. The most extreme individualists among them could “light out for the Territory” when they felt crowded, or, as in the famous case of Thoreau, make a living by the craft of land surveying, and write their own declarations of independence. The gradual development of large-scale industrialisation and the growing local, state, and eventually federal bureaucracies (a term I do not use pejoratively) lessened the possibility of self-employment. But the tendency to form volunteer associations was stimulated not only by the needs of frontier life. Later immigrant groups arrived in a country where

the land had already been occupied, and had to take their places in the developing cities. There, they followed the American pattern of voluntary self-help organisations among their fellow countrymen or *Landsleute*, thus limiting egoism by recognising the collective need of the group to survive. Here again, in recent decades, affluence has freed the children and grandchildren of these immigrants from such familistic and communal restraints.

IT IS COMMON TO BECOME nostalgic about early American history. As a result, we may assume that in the Puritan era and even down until the Civil War, there was a golden age of youth/adult relations. In this mythic period, American young people were relatively obedient, lived in extended families in which they had daily chores and responsibilities for younger siblings, and obeyed religious mandates and moral codes. It is true that these children were often nourished on fairy tales and on stories of great heroes such as George Washington, and on the belief that effort and courage would be rewarded by both approval and adequate material success. Certainly those who did exert effort and courage felt that they had social support. But detailed historical studies indicate what Tocqueville and Frances Trollope also observed: namely, that American children were not by European standards obedient.

Tocqueville was astonished by the young American girl who, prior to marriage, was permitted without a chaperone to go around on her own, and in some measure to lead her own life. However, most observers and historians also agree that the independence and assertiveness of young Americans in the past was typically coupled with a significant level of responsibility. When a young person, in disregard of parental or community norms, set off on his own, he was expected to accept the consequences of his potential failure. Furthermore, when parents found the rebelliousness of their children too troubling, the norms authorised them to disown them or expel them from the household. In other words, independence and assertiveness may have been appropriate values for young people who had to make their way in an unstable environment. But young persons who did not learn to exercise such freedom judiciously were quickly brought either to acceptance of responsibility or to bankruptcy and ruin by the exigencies of an unforgiving physical and social environment.

BUT EXCESSIVE EGOISM AND GREED—in contrast to independence—were characteristic of one group of people, the stock speculators. These were prominent in our society from Andrew Jackson's day onward. They were manipulators rather than craftsmen. Their conduct led to much waste and corruption as practised by persons like Jay Gould and Commodore Vanderbilt. It is, in my judgment, unfortunate that men like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were lumped as "robber barons" under the same rubric as more rapacious and unproductive men. These organisers of large-scale industry rationalised production and organised business efficiently, and no more rapaciously than those whose small enterprises they bought out or swallowed up. They also often generously bequeathed their fortunes to philanthropy, while the manipulators were more inclined to spend their speculative fortunes on mansions in Newport and efforts to buy their daughters European titles through marriage. By no means did all men who were church adherents practise restraint; but it does seem significant to me that John D. Rockefeller and his immediate descendants were devout Baptists.

From "Robber Baron" to "Organization Man"

EVENTUALLY the creative founders and 'robber barons' gave way, in the large organisations they built, to corporate civil servants—in many cases rather timid men, dependent on the skilled and individualistic work of craftsmen and engineers. Still, other solo entrepreneurs continued to come up, whether in the film industry or in oil or real estate. The late Howard Hughes would be an almost classic case of this type, going beyond individualism to egocentrism. However, by the 1950s, social critics were more concerned about preventing excessive conformity to social norms than restraining the ruthless men (termed "jungle fighters" in Michael Maccoby's *The Gamesman*) who in any case seldom rose to head large corporations. For example, William Whyte Jr's *The Organization Man* (1956), with its critical portraits of conformist executives and their compliant wives, was a best-seller.

The late Erich Fromm in his *Escape from Freedom* (1941) expressed the fear that Americans would submerge their independence in mass movements. The submergence might eventually produce an apparent solution, with submission to a totali-

tarian mass movement. However, it was more likely to lead to a less catastrophic outcome: the loneliness and anxiety created by fear of freedom, combined with unwillingness to take responsibility and maintain sufficient respect for one's own life. And, in *Man for Himself*, Fromm criticised Americans for lacking sufficient self-love to be capable of loving others.²

This brief review of the literature emphasises that our current outburst of egocentrism was preceded by a body of serious writings and by institutional developments, both of which signified the decline of certain traditional modes of American individualism. It is understandable that these developments might create a climate in which people were disposed to sympathise with efforts to revive earlier patterns. But, as Tocqueville emphasised, our earlier individuation was coupled with a commitment to vital voluntary associations. And it was moderated by the practical inhibitions generated by an environment of comparative scarcity. Perhaps one way of characterising our current destructive dedication to egocentrism is to say that we do not understand the way in which the individualism of our past was tempered by social controls and voluntary associations.

Private Interests & Egocentrism

IT SHOULD BE CLEAR that someone is not automatically egocentric just because he does not go outside the circle of his own immediate interests, or fails to become socially or politically active. Anyone who has a passionate and disciplined interest in nature, for example, or in the cultural environment—in music or history, theology, poetry or astronomy—is clearly not confined to what Quentin Anderson termed *The Imperial Self*. There are many ways of relating to the world outside oneself: to the human and the inanimate; to the past, the present, and the future—and there are many such modes that have not yet been invented. (For example, the beauty of mountains was, in the West, the invention of 19th-

century Romantics.) But all such relationships, if they are significant, require some element of sublimation.

What is characteristic of the egocentric person is the lack of a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world. Instead, among the upper- and upper-middle-class people who have reached sufficient affluence, the desire to acquire material possessions diminishes, and is replaced with a hunger for what are often fleeting “experiences” (including other people who are exploited as forms of such experience).

Although these experiences, by definition, are often ephemeral, they are “consumer goods”; they are usually costly, and they are bought and sold. They include services such as tourism to other countries in whose cultures no real investment is made, or the “experience” of being seen at the most fashionable discos or avant-garde exhibits. These experienced consumers have acquired no historical ballast against which to weigh the novelties sold them by often cynical contemporary artists. The encounter groups which people enter can, in this light, be seen as another form of shopping for experiences, a commitment rapidly terminated—like many casual love affairs—by pre-agreement at the outset. In the 1960s and early 1970s (more than at present) students from this social class in more or less experimental colleges could proceed without any curricular constraint, sampling “experiences” without sufficient effort to determine whether or not one could find real pleasure in more diligent and sustained effort.

RESPONDING TO SUCH apparent extravagances of choice, many contemporary conservatives have been demanding for example, that schools “go back to basics.” They fail to appreciate at least two factors in their own romantic view of the past and their over-jaundiced view of the present:

1. In the past—an era of scarce resources—much apparently “voluntary” behaviour was in fact constrained because no other alternatives were available. If we wish to recreate some of the patterns of the past that seem attractive, we will have to engage in more compulsion than was practised in the past, since many of the previous constraints were only the incidental products of an environment of scarcity. In some instances, this misunderstanding leads such conservatives to glorify forms of personal freedom, as in old-style robber baron buccaneering, or behaviour of the sort advocated

² A book today with the title *Man for Himself* would simply be added to the shelf of books on self-realisation by self-aggrandisement which Lasch discusses in *The Culture of Narcissism*. But Fromm was writing at a time when “private” or particularistic individual interests appeared popularly suspect, because they did not seem to advance the interests of the group or the nation-state.

See also my article “The Uncommitted Generation” in *ENCOUNTER*, November 1960.

by Ayn Rand. However, such conduct never existed in any large measure in earlier eras, where social norms—hardly less powerful than in European countries—and, certainly, religious norms had greater force.

2. The critics fail to see what has been achieved and would be lost if education were confined to the so-called basics: namely, the tremendous efflorescence of interest in the arts among Americans today, so that the strictures of H. L. Mencken against the “booboisie” appear quaint when almost every community of any size has its own art museum, theatre, library, symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, and sports activities. Moreover, the “basics” excluded a great deal of both the American and non-American worlds: within the United States, focusing on political history to the exclusion of the history of labour, of women, of Blacks and other oppressed minorities, while regarding the rest of the planet—as many Americans still ethnocentrically do—with ignorant self-righteousness.

NOT EVERYONE IS CAPABLE OF achieving the heights of thought, nor of making valuable social contributions. But the emphasis on personal experience is like the emphasis on feelings—everyone can have experiences and everyone has feelings. As Lasch has written:

“... ‘I feel’ has displaced ‘I think’ as the prelude even to statements which purport to describe objective reality. Statements about reality thus dissolve into opinions, and finally into mere expressions of personal feeling.... All feelings are treated as equally legitimate. In the very act of upholding the importance of feeling, the modern sensibility denies its importance by treating feelings as harmless and allowing them unlimited expression.”

But it is a mistake to conclude that all feelings or experiences are in fact equal. Some feelings are shallow and trivial, and perhaps avowed only for the sake of believing oneself part of the egalitarian group. Similarly, experiences differ in quality as do thoughts themselves. This inequality of feelings and experiences gives them their potential for great significance. Inequality invites us to identify excellences—and deficiencies—and to encourage those with inadequate feelings and experiences to strive to deepen their awareness of their own feelings, the long-term significance of their experiences, and to exercise greater discrimination in their assessments of themselves and others.

Will the Trend toward Egocentrism Continue?

A STRONG INTELLECTUAL COUNTER-ATTACK is now under way against the encroachments of egocentrism. This includes attempts to understand the origins of egocentrism in its specifically contemporary American forms. The modern forms of egocentrism rarely assume the dramatic shape of the 19th-century Faustian strivings to simply reach out and seize happiness directly. Such blunt—and daring—ventures are more characteristic of an earlier era of scarce resources and religious prohibitions. In that earlier era, the assumption was that there was some simple and concrete network of prohibitions that should—and might—be shattered by an awe-inspiring or demoniacal feat. This Faustian vision undoubtedly had its deficiencies. However, it at least had the virtue of warning those who were tempted (or who yielded) that the role of shatterer of prohibitions was painful as well as glamorous. At this time, the popular presumption is that the constraining network can be eroded by the cumulative effect of numerous displays of post-adolescent petulance, and by the effort at easy reassurance provided by the assertion of a vague medley of claims and rights.

There are some psychoanalytically oriented clinicians who have been studying narcissistic personalities who express egocentrism in pathological forms. These physicians have readily concluded that a life devoted to the gratification of impulse and to the expression of a supposedly *authentic self* is often empty.

A number of non-clinical writers are advocating, as a counter to egocentrism, the creation or the renovation of neighbourhoods, sometimes based on ethnic cohesion (emphasised by such Catholic communalists as Andrew Greeley and Michael Novak), sometimes on physical proximity. In many colleges and universities, there is an effort under way to restore some sense of curricular cohesion, in contrast to the “*anything goes*” programme of the last ten years. It has become clear that by no means are all students enamoured of what in a study of higher education I have termed the “over-optimized life.”

I believe that another constructive change in US higher education might be stimulated if trustees and board members—especially in residential institutions—required administrators and faculty to assume more serious responsibilities toward the students who are in their charge. Concrete steps in this direction are extremely difficult. One measure would be for the boards to ask everybody to

adopt and widely publish clear codes of faculty and student interpersonal ethics. The codes should include both enforcement systems with teeth and frank statements to potential students (and their parents) of the implications of the codes. Unfortunately, I fear that, in many cases, such codes will be banal, and their enforcement provisions unrealistic and cumbersome. These problems in draftsmanship will be due not to the drafters' lack of literacy, but to the reluctance of many (currently irresponsible) persons to acquiesce to legitimate authority. Still, perhaps some firm and persistent trustees can eventually wring useful products from their charges—just as many Greek heroes eventually overcame their monstrous mythic enemies by pursuing them through numerous transformations.

OF COURSE, EVEN A GOOD CODE will not solve everything; faculty support would still be very important. Today, only a very few institutions, such as the University of Virginia, maintain an Honour Code in which expulsion is the penalty for violation. Among other things, a code should make it wholly clear to students that plagiarism is a form of stealing from each other, not to be tolerated either by them or by faculty—the latter often intimidated by fear of elaborate grievance procedures and the students resort to litigation. Such codes are often jeopardised by condescension towards

students from deprived backgrounds, on the ground that their "subculture" has no such regulations, and that, therefore, they cannot be expected to abide by those of the academic institution. Such treatment only invites the cultivation of "hustling" and is no service to the previously deprived.

At lower-school levels, both in a few exceptional state schools and in parochial and other independent schools, efforts are under way to increase possibilities for students to participate in significant collective activities—for example, in tutoring younger and less advantaged students—and, generally, to intensify their commitment to a complex social life which transcends the easy temptations of popular culture.

MANY OF OUR MOST THOUGHTFUL social critics, such as Kenneth Boulding, have for years emphasised the growing interdependence created by modern technology in a world that Buckminster Fuller has called "Spaceship Earth." In all industrial countries, we have become increasingly aware of the need for diligent cooperation among individuals, ethnic groups, the two sexes, and—most visionary of all—the warlike nation-states. We have come to recognise that it is costly to indulge the excesses of the egocentric person who rides Spaceship Earth as if he or she were the only passenger.

National Gallery

See him arrested innocently
before a portrait, not his
but related to him by marriage
of their reciprocated blindness.

He gazes. It gazes back,
mindlessly interrogating
his silence. What brought him
in? Privilege of a free country

saw to it he was ingested
smoothly by those revolving
doors to prove the deficiency
of his schooling. Here, but for

a change of clothing, is a replica
of his person, but how much more
richly framed. Baffled, he takes
its dimensions: the long eyebrows,

the longer nose; the frosty
collar, remaining in that high temperature
unthawed; the unthinkableness of the distance
lying between finger and wrist.

Ah, the vernacular of art!
An Englishman speaks to an Englishman
over the centuries in human
terms, and he is unable to hear him.

R. S. Thomas

H. L. Mencken for Grown-ups

By Joseph Epstein

A PART FROM being forgotten altogether, surely the next lowest circle in literary hell is for a writer to be chalked up as a period piece. Such a fate is usually—and mercifully—a posthumous one, but H. L. Mencken, the American essayist and publicist, felt something of its sting in his life-time.

Mencken's birth and death dates are 1880–1956, though, in one of the gods' crueller practical jokes, he suffered a stroke in 1948 that allowed him, one of the most bookish of men, to read only with the greatest difficulty and to write not at all. But H. L. Mencken's apogee came in the period between the end of World War I and the onset of the Depression. "So many young men got their likes and dislikes from Mencken", runs a sentence from Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). And so they did; and so, in an oddly angled way, they would continue to. Along with being considered a writer very much of his period—associated with good but now moribund causes: the struggle against the genteel tradition in literature, against censorship in politics, against puritanical restraints in social life—Mencken has also been considered chiefly a young man's writer. He was, certainly, deemed a writer an intelligent fellow would soon outgrow. Such then is Mencken's current reputation: a writer of the 1920s and a writer for the young. Damned, you might say, and double damned.

Not that this unenviable literary reputation is entirely askew. For a long while reading H. L. Mencken was part of the tradition of growing up for young men with intellectual interests in America, though perhaps now the tradition is beginning to thin out. For myself, he was a writer I adored at 18. What I adored about him above all was his iconoclasm, even though the icons he set about busting, by the time I came to read him in the middle 1950s, were long gone: the politicians William Jennings Bryan, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Warren Gamaliel Harding, and Calvin Coolidge; Prohibition; fundamentalist religion; all the habits and attitudes and hidebound views that for him marched under the flag of 20th-century American Puritanism. The pleasure in

reading Mencken came in witnessing a man lashing out so handsomely, bashing away with an exuberance I did not even know was allowed in literature till encountering him. Such at any rate was the reaction of a middle-class boy at the University of Chicago, which, as it turns out, was not so very different from the reaction to Mencken, some three decades earlier, of Richard Wright, who in his autobiography, *Black Boy*, tells of sneaking a Mencken volume out of the Memphis library:

"That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weakness of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words. . . . Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it."

What is of interest here is the universality of Mencken's appeal to the young, for his attraction for Richard Wright, a Mississippi Negro raised in poverty and terror, and for me, a young man with so many material advantages, was nearly identical. And he had the selfsame effect on thousands of other young Americans.

BUT AS I GREW OLDER I pulled away from Mencken. Too many of his opinions clashed with my own. He held low views of human nature. He was anti-government, not keen for democracy,

thought capitalism the least evil of all economic arrangements. He held idealism to be little more than a swindle. In the 1930s Michael Gold, then the editor of *The New Masses*, accused Mencken of "killing social idealism in young America." He was opposed to the New Deal and even more opposed to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.¹ In short, I found H. L. Mencken politically objectionable. Were he alive and had we met I suspect he would have found me boring and laughable—the very type, as he would characterise it in a famous essay, of "the forward looker."

I CAME BACK to reading Mencken because I had been asked by an American magazine to write about Professor Carl Bode's edition of *The New Mencken Letters*. In the course of reading these letters and other of Mencken's writings, along with writings about him, I made a number of small but to me impressive discoveries. One was that, although I thought I had put away the scribbles of H. L. Mencken along with other childish things, I now found I took greater pleasure and sustenance from them than ever before. For me at least, H. L. Mencken is one of those writers who get better as one gets older—and such, of course, are the best kind of writers.

And I discovered something else. Although Montesquieu says, "I have never had a sorrow that an hour of reading did not dissipate", Montesquieu was not under the burden of staying intellectually *au courant* with literary and intellectual life in the last quarter of the 20th century. He did not have to cast his eyes over the literary criticisms of Harold Bloom or Jacques Derrida, the fictions of Joseph Heller or John Barth, or the humourless social

commentary of the American Christophers, Lasch and Jencks; otherwise he would not have spoken so readily about reading dissipating sorrows. But some writers, it is true, do lift one out of gloom, and away from the valley of small and large woes; and, for myself, I have found three writers who perform this service for me almost unfailingly: Montaigne, Justice Holmes (in his letters), and Henry Louis Mencken.

Mencken lifts the spirit—how appalled he would be to find himself accused of uplift!—but such undeniably is his effect on me. Does the reason for this lie in his power as a comedian? To be sure, few Americans writers have been funnier. Who but Mencken could refer to clichés as "the old wheezing of the melodeon"; or to a hot dog as "a cartridge filled with the sweepings of the abattoir"; or to college teachers as "the average drover of undergraduates"? When sex hygienists explain sex by analogy with botany all they achieve is to "make botany seem obscene." As for Freud, he simply translated the age-old fact that most men and women are frauds "into pathological terms, adding a bedroom scene, and so laid the foundations for psychoanalysis." Mencken is one of that too small company of modern writers (with Evelyn Waugh and S. J. Perelman) who can make one laugh aloud. Mencken's comedy—of phrase, of formulation, of perspective—partly explains his ability to lift the spirits, but only, I think, partly.

Might the explanation be found in his prose, with its boundless energy? Along with Ernest Hemingway, H. L. Mencken devised one of the few original and unmistakable American prose styles of the current century. He had great orchestral power. Karl Kraus once described journalists as men who, given time, wrote worse. Not Mencken: everything he wrote, whether composed on the run or after leisurely cerebration, had his characteristic energy, music, and elegance. How Mencken achieved his effects can, on a technical level, be easily enough perceived. What is entailed is rather easily formulated: strong verbs, exotic nouns, outrageous adjectives, a confident cadence, superior humour, and wide learning. Walter Lippmann, in an essay of 1926, said of the effect of reading Mencken:

"When you can explain the heightening effect of a spirited horse, of a swift athlete, of a dancer really in control of his own body, when you can explain why watching them you feel more alive yourself, you can explain the quality of his influence."

During the years that he edited *The American Mercury* it was sometimes alleged that entire issues of the monthly magazine read as if written by Mencken himself. There are two possible explanations here: one is that Mencken rewrote many of the things that appeared in the magazine; the other—which seems more likely—is that con-

¹ Mencken's decline in popularity set in with the Depression. He had very little regard for Marxism and kept himself free from the sectarian politics that exerted so strong a pull on intellectuals and writers in the 1930s.

If not lining up for the great left-wing causes of the 1930s cost Mencken a large part of his earlier following, his late recognition of the true intent of Adolf Hitler cost him the remainder. Mencken had a "German problem." As a journalist of German ancestry, he suffered greatly during World War I, being viewed as insufficiently patriotic. US participation in World War I brought with it a state of frenzied hatred of all things German unmatched in the nation's history. The German language was barred from many public and private schools; German-Americans were often ridiculed and sometimes attacked on the streets; sauerkraut was renamed "liberty cabbage." With this history of American anti-German hysteria in mind, Mencken was most hesitant to believe the worst about Hitler, though it cannot really be said that he was neutral on the subject. In a letter of 1936 he wrote:

"I don't know a single man of any reputation in America who is in favor of the Nazi scheme. As it stands, Germany has completely lost the sympathy it had during the years following 1920."

tributors felt the pull of his influence and succumbed to it. Many a young man in the 1920s scribbled away *à la* Mencken, composing tirades against the local minister or YMCA, and even today, in 1980, there is published in Bloomington, Indiana, a monthly journal called *The American Spectator* edited by a man in his 30s named R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., who writes in strict imitation of H. L. Mencken. It isn't a bad imitation; Mr Tyrrell has a number of the various Menckonian moves down fairly well, he can lay on the Menckonian primary colours, can play the young curmudgeon in feigned high dudgeon, and yet . . . and yet, it doesn't quite come off. The reasons that it doesn't are several, but chief among them is that, even though Mr Tyrrell can attack his opponents (as Mencken once put it) "brutally, either with cackle or invective", Mr Tyrrell hasn't H. L. Mencken's point of view. And it is point of view that cannot be imitated.²

POINT OF VIEW in a writer is always a matter of the keenest interest, and in a writer who is not a novelist or poet or dramatist it is a matter of central interest. The sense in which I intend point of view to be taken is suggested by a line in V. S. Naipaul's novel *Guerrillas*, in which Naipaul remarks about the novel's only female character, a woman who has been a camp follower for many causes, that "she had a great many opinions but these did not add up to a point of view." Everyone has opinions—writers, academics, people who do intellectual work of one kind or another—but not everyone has a point of view.

Part of the tribute that we pay great artists is to ignore many of their opinions. If one took all of Tolstoy's many opinions to heart, one would have to discard his best novels as contradictions of his stated views. If believing the full parcel of Dostoevsky's opinions were the price of admission, no non-Christian could afford to read his novels. Theodore Dreiser, whom Mencken once cited for "his curious antipathy to the *mot juste*", had an equivalent antipathy to consistency of opinion, and could go from communism to fascism almost as easily as Mencken himself from dessert to cigar. Sometimes an artist will go too far, even for an artist—witness Ezra Pound's speeches for Mussolini—and is brought to book for it (though in Pound's case we have an instance of opinion backed up by action). But artists holding egregious opinions are an old story. The modern tendency is by and large to forgive artists their prejudices, to say, well, if these opinions do not spoil the artist's work, then the devil take his opinions; and the modern tendency is, for the most part, correct.

² See R. Emmett Tyrrell's collection of polemical essays, *Public Nuisances* (Basic Books, 1978).

But for writers who are not poets or novelists or dramatists but who deal more directly with the experience and materials of life—for, that is, essayists and certain critics—opinions do seem to weigh in more heavily. For some among these writers their opinions define them almost completely. Certain political writers are eager, in fact hot, to be identified with their cause, be it conservatism, radicalism, or liberalism. Other writers are specialists in holding only up-to-the-moment and certifiably O.K. opinions; these are men and women who stay in mental shape by jumping on-and-off political and cultural band-wagons. Yet other writers are so consistently mistaken—or vicious, or cowardly—in their opinions as to give irrefutable evidence of bad character. And there are writers who ask to be judged solely by the purity of their opinions, even though these opinions have



nothing to do with the way they actually live: critics of capitalism driving Mercedes, professors of ethics sleeping with their students. As Mencken said of the Puritan of his day, so one might say of the large number of intellectuals who fit snugly into this last category, that with them "moral obligation is something quite outside personal conduct, and has very little to do with it."

But the best writers, I maintain, cannot be defined by their opinions alone, or even chiefly. Take, as an instance, George Orwell, who called himself a socialist and thought himself a radical but today is most admired by people quite on the other side. And he is admired less for his discrete opinions than for his general point of view, his way of "looking out at the world." So it has always been: Hazlitt was fervently for Napoleon, but this is an attitude that scarcely matters to those of us who care about Hazlitt today. Lamb's views seem of negligible interest; and Emerson seems to moot the entire question by holding all opinions, many of them cancelling one another out. No, it is not their opinions but the possession of an interesting point of view among the great essayists that separates them from their fellow workers, making them, in their own fashion, artists in prose. H. L. Mencken was an artist, perhaps the greatest of the American essayists, and what makes him an artist is his special point of view.

THE PROBLEM in the case of Mencken is that most people, even if they have not read him since adolescence, think they know what his point of view is. Edmund Wilson, who wrote about Mencken on several occasions (and always with respect), in 1921 noted of him: "Mencken is the civilised consciousness of modern America, its learning, its intelligence and its taste, realizing the grossness of its manners and mind, and crying out in horror and chagrin. . . ." Nice though it might at first seem to have this little corsage of praise pinned to one's shirt, Mencken, I suspect, would have declined to wear it. Wilson's praise makes H. L. Mencken sound like nothing quite so much as a member of the Bloomsbury Group on a Peace Corps mission to help civilise the natives of the United States. Wilson's mention of Mencken's taste, for example, is quite off target. Taste was not a thing Mencken prided himself on, or set out to demonstrate in his writings. In an essay entitled "Education", in fact, he speaks of a high-school teacher—Mencken never went to university—who

"introduced me to Shakespeare, Congreve, Wycherley, Marlowe and Sheridan, and so filled me with that taste for coarseness which now offends so many of my customers, lay and clerical. . . ."

As for Wilson's remark about Mencken "crying out in horror and chagrin", this, as Mencken himself might have said, was sheerest fustian, buncombe, bosh, tosh, balderdash, blather, blague, pother, rodomontade . . . and other epithets that he reserved for those statements that fell into the category of the obviously not true. Mencken rather enjoyed America, and probably for precisely the reasons that he gave in his essay "On Being an American":

"Me [he wrote], I like it because it amuses me to my taste. I never get tired of the show. It is worth every cent it costs."

Possibly Edmund Wilson confused Mencken as Mencken said people confused the cynic, by thinking him an unhappy man; this is "a false deduction", Mencken said, deduced "from the obvious fact that cynics make other men unhappy."

Mencken thought, true enough, that the cynic was in a privileged position in life, and compared him to "a wedding guest who has known the bride for nine years and has had her confidence." Yet define a cynic as one may, any durable definition must allow that at bottom a cynic feels a distaste for life. This requisite distaste Mencken sorely lacked. The late Philip Rahv—a Marxist in politics and a modernist in literature, and hence a man with a real appetite for gloom—once referred to H. L. Mencken as "the ideologue of enjoyment." I am not sure what Rahv intended by this lumpish phrase; I am sure, though, that for Rahv enjoyment was no good thing—certainly nothing that ought to occupy a serious mind. And if under the banner of enjoyment one includes mirth, then, who can say, Mencken may have been its ideologue. "Mirth", Mencken wrote, "is necessary to wisdom, to comfort, above all, to happiness."

MIRTH Mencken could be counted upon to supply. But his laughter, like that of all first-class humorists, is at bottom serious. His essay "Professor Veblen" might serve as a model. The energy of Mencken's prose in this essay is olympic; one can almost visualise its author, before sitting down to the writing of it, slipping off his jacket, rolling up his shirt-sleeves, spitting on his palms. He begins by citing Thorstein Veblen as the latest in a chain of "geysers of pish-posh", and would prefer to waste no further time upon his "incomprehensible syllogisms." None the less, out of a sense of duty, he read all Veblen's writings, from which he emerged weakened but with the "good news" that, to have "a fairly good general acquaintance with the gifted metaphysician's ideas", all that any of the rest of us need read is *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) and *The Higher Learning in America* (1918). If pressed for time,

Mencken tells us, the former volume alone will suffice.

But even this will be a bit of a struggle, because Veblen's style interposed itself so obdurately between his ideas and his readers. As anyone who has read him will recall, Veblen was something of a specialist at getting as little thought into as many words as possible. Such thought as he has is, according to Mencken, "simply Socialism and water." If the style be the message, what Veblen's style conveys to Mencken is "a relentless disease, a sort of progressive intellectual diabetes, a leprosy of the horse sense." Mencken then takes off after the most notable notion in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, "the theory of conspicuous consumption."

"... On page 135 of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* he [Veblen] turns his garish and buzzing search-light upon another problem of the domestic hearth, this time a double one. First, why do we have lawns around our country houses? Secondly, why don't we employ cows to keep them clipped...? Why do we renounce cows and hire Jugo-Slavs? Because 'to the average popular apprehension a herd of cattle so pointedly suggests thrift and usefulness that their presence... would be intolerably cheap.' With the highest veneration. Bosh! Plowing through a bad book from end to end, I can find nothing sillier than this. Here, indeed, the whole 'theory of conspicuous waste' is exposed for precisely what it is: one per cent platitude and ninety-five per cent nonsense. Has the genial professor, pondering his great problems, ever taken a walk in the country? And has he, in the course of that walk, ever crossed a pasture inhabited by a cow (*Bos taurus*)? And has he, making that crossing, ever passed astern of the cow herself? And has he, thus passing astern, ever stepped carelessly, and—

But this is not a medical work, and so I had better haul up."

This is vintage Mencken, the throttle full out; and the real force propelling it is Mencken's jocose wonder at the simple unreality of a man like Thorstein Veblen. Mencken had an appreciation for the reality of things, a quality rare in men who deal in art or ideas. He always strained to see things plain and as they really were. His animus against the Veblens of the world is that, with their concepts and notions, they flattened out reality—and, in the act of doing so, not only got things wrong but made them less interesting than they are. Veblen's ideas were at bottom nothing more than higher platitudes, and Mencken defined a platitude thus: "on the one hand it is universally admitted and on the other hand it is not true."

IF MENCKEN WAS the great scourge of the platitudinarians, high and low, he was also something of a poet of common sense. Justice Holmes (in a letter to Harold J. Laski) remarked on Mencken's "sense of reality", adding, "and most of his prejudices I share." Walter Lippmann said that Mencken was "in touch with life."

Two of his earliest books were on Nietzsche and on Shaw ("It is his life work to announce the obvious in terms of the scandalous"). Like Nietzsche, Mencken could be wildly extravagant; but unlike Nietzsche he was always sane. Like Shaw, Mencken made a living out of detesting hypocrisy; but unlike Shaw, he was without the pretensions of the pundit. He could be relied upon to seize the central point. Thus, in a brief piece about Ring Lardner, he writes:

"He has grasped the primary fact that no conceivable ingenuity can save a story that fails to show a recognizable and interesting character; he knows that a good character sketch is always a good story, no matter what its structure."

That is still true, and renders nugatory all the dark lucubrations of our modern theorists of fictions.

Common sense of Mencken's kind is also, surprisingly, long-lived. Although today the media are a great subject of study, and in the USA there are writers and teachers of journalism who are called "media ecologists", surely the following short passage from Mencken's essay, "Journalism in America", is, *mutatis mutandis*, the first thing that anyone who has had any contact with journalism in our day knows or needs to know. Mencken is discussing whether publishers are to blame for the shoddiness of newspapers:

"But do they [the publishers] issue orders that their papers shall be printed in blowsy, clumsy English? That they shall stand against every decent thing, and in favor of everything that is meretricious and ignoble? That they shall wallow in trivialities, and manhandle important news? That their view of learning shall be that of a bartender?... Or that helpless men, with the mob against them, should be pursued without fairness, decency or sense? I doubt it. I doubt, even, that the Babbitts turned Greeleys are responsible, in the last analysis, for the political rubbish that fills their papers.... The average newspaper proprietor, I suspect, gets nine-tenths of his political ideas from his own men.... What they tell him is, in the long run, what he believes, with certain inconsiderable corrections by professionals trying to work him. If only because they have confidential access to him day in and day out, they are able to introduce their own notions into his head. He may have their jobs in his hand, but they have his ears and eyes, so to speak, in theirs."

In Mencken's day, as in ours, the platitudes came in from all sides, from journalists, professors, politicians, novelists, intellectuals, clergymen (more then than now, of course), and the bilge bids fair to flood the joint. Mencken's reason for attacking ignorant religion, as he did so often in his day, was that he felt that if someone doesn't, "there will be no security for sound sense among us, and little for common decency." Similarly, he mocked psychology because he believed that it did not "make the world more comprehensible, and hence more bearable"—which it may not even to this day.

"For it is the natural tendency of the ignorant to believe what is not true. In order to counter that tendency it is not sufficient to exhibit the true; it is also necessary to expose and denounce the false."

This, then as now, was a full-time job, with plenty of opportunity for overtime.

Did H. L. Mencken know the truth? I do not believe that he ever claimed that he did. He did, however, know a thing or two. He knew what honour was, and valued it. He said that of all things in the world he most admired craftsmanship; and he knew it when he saw it. He could spot "phonies" of all sorts, either singly or by the herd. He knew the arts of literature and music well, and language even better. But above all he knew what he did not know—and what he felt could not be known. Included in the unknowable was the following:

"No one knows Who created the visible universe, and it is infinitely improbable that anything properly describable as evidence on the point will ever be discovered. No one knows what motives or intentions, if any, lie behind what we call natural laws. No one knows why man has his present form. No one knows why sin and suffering were sent into this world—that is, why the fashioning of man was so badly botched."

Mencken was of course famously agnostic, but his agnosticism was far from the kind that expressed itself in indifference. True, fundamentalist religions were in their heyday when he was in his; America was still preponderantly a Protestant country, and Protestantism, in its various forms, gave the United States its tone—a tone that H. L. Mencken felt to be, to put it gently, highly uncivilised. But more, I think, is entailed than that religion offered Mencken a large and important and regular target at which to shoot his rationalist arrows.

I have recently looked at the six volumes of *Prejudices*, and in reading through them I was especially struck with how often Mencken refers to godly things—and not mockingly but in connection with what he thought to be the tragedy of existence. In his essay on "The National Letters", he criticises

American fiction for not often enough taking up the subject of the "man of delicate organization in revolt against the inexplicable tragedy of existence." He refers to the "poignant and significant conflict between a salient individual and the harsh and meaningless fiat of destiny, the unintelligible mandates and vagaries of God. . . ." Of Beethoven, he writes: "He is a great tragic poet, and like all great tragic poets, he is obsessed by a sense of the inscrutable meaninglessness of life." Of Conrad and Dreiser, his two favourites among novelists roughly contemporary with himself, he wrote that they are

"forever fascinated by the 'immense indifference of things', the tragic vanity of the blind groping that we call aspiration, the profound meaninglessness of life—fascinated and left wondering. . . . God and man are eternal antagonists."

This is not quite the iconoclastic Mencken.

UNDERLYING MENCKEN'S many views and opinions, then, is a tragic sense of life. His belief that the great questions in life were unanswerable, the great problems unsolvable, issued in a pervasive scepticism. But Mencken's scepticism did not in turn issue in mere negation. "The natural state of reflective man is one of depression." Yet he himself seems to have been one of the most ebullient of men. Is there a contradiction?

L'homme moyen sensuel; the averagely sensual man with the brilliantly active mind. A tragic sense of life he indubitably had, a sceptic he undeniably was, yet Mencken also retained a love for all that life had to offer, esteeming the pleasure of food and drink (the world would be a kindlier place if most people went about "gently stewed"), of music and literature, of work and friendship. His tragical reading of the ultimate meaninglessness of existence made these things seem not less but more important.

Nor did Mencken neglect the pain in the world. He scoffed at the extravagant complaints of writers about their hard and lonely work: "If authors could work in large well-ventilated factories, like cigar-makers or garment workers, with plenty of their mates about and a flow of lively professional gossip to entertain them, their labor would be immensely lighter. . . ." Mencken once set the portion of the "human race that had the ability to think at one-eighth of one percent." (As for the rest, he said: "The only thing to do with them is to make PhD's of them, and set them to writing handbooks on style.") He spoke more than once of the need for a cultural aristocracy—"secure in its position, animated by an intelligent curiosity, sceptical of all facile generalizations, superior to the sentimentality of the mob, and delighting in the battle of ideas for

its own sake"—but there was never anything snobbish about this. He valued the working man rather more than he did intellectuals and professors; he thought printers, for example, clearly superior to journalists as a human type; and in the Caedmon recording he made in 1948, he said sadly that he had heard that printers had descended to playing golf. He thought well of the "saloon culture" of his day. And he was far from unmindful of the endless burdens of the mass of humanity. At the close of his Third Series of *Prejudices* (1919–1927) Mencken placed a little piece entitled "Suite Américaine", a list of the sadnesses inherent in the lives of Americans.

"College professors in one-building universities on the prairie, still hoping, at the age of sixty, to get their whimsical essays into the *Atlantic Monthly*. . . . Car conductors on lonely suburban lines, trying desperately to save up \$500 and start a Ford garage. . . . Women hidden away in the damp kitchens of unpainted houses along the railroad tracks, frying tough beefsteaks. . . . Ticket-choppers in the subway, breathing sweat in its gaseous form. . . . Women confined for the ninth or tenth time, wondering helplessly what it is all about. . . . The old lady in Wahoo, Neb., who has read the Bible 38 times. . . . The boss who controls the Italian, Czecho-Slovak and Polish votes in Youngstown, O. . . . The youngest murderer in Chicago. . . ."

As is well enough known, H. L. Mencken was no great advocate of the theory or practice of democracy; quite the reverse. Yet what I make him out to have believed is not that all people are created equal—a notion contradicted by daily experience—but that people are to be equally valued: an ideal more realistic, more generous, more humane.

THE AMERICAN BOBOISIE, *homo boobiens*—these are perhaps the two of Mencken's best remembered phrases. Yet the reason Mencken brought these phrases into play cannot, I think, have been simply out of contempt for his countrymen. He viewed them, true enough, as endlessly gullible—always prepared to believe (as he more than once put it) that "Jonah swallowed the whale." But in an odd way it was the common man, so regularly bilked by his clergymen, journalists, professors, politicians, in whose defence Mencken wrote. Life might be harsh and meaningless, an endless struggle with its outcome known in advance to be cheerless, but that was only all the more reason not to live out one's days hostage to ideas that denied reality or outraged human nature.

Homo boobiens was, well, *boobien*, precisely because he fell, time and again, for shoddy mental goods that made his life less good than it might have been, even under the restrictions of the tragic view.

H. L. Mencken once averred that "Life, fundamentally, is not worth living." But why, then, did he himself live it so marvellously well? Mencken may be exceptional among modern writers in living his life honourably, discharging his responsibilities with manly promptitude, never less than decent to colleagues, friends, and family, and utterly without sordor. What is more, whenever Mencken registers what might be construed as an objectionable or cruel opinion, one can count on discovering acts of particular kindness that contradict that opinion. He attacks religion, then enters into friendships with nuns and ministers; he relentlessly mocks the pursuit of men by women, then, in middle life, himself marries a woman whose death within a few years is certain. No evidence of envy or unseemly ambition is to be found in the record of his life. Although he did his best to hide it "The Holy Terror", the "Bad Boy of Baltimore", as the press used to refer to him, appears to have been a quite good man.

FINALLY, what of H. L. Mencken's "point of view"?

There is his tragic sense of life—which is to say, his ability to look into the pit of existence without flinching or whining; his scepticism, which, while it set him to attack those people who claimed to know the unknowable and to have solutions to the unsolvable, none the less bred a certain humility in him; and there is his life, which, though he claimed to be an antinomian from the age of eleven, had about it, in its essentials, a rare virtuousness. Add to all this his humour, and his sensible reminder that "one good horselaugh is worth 10,000 syllogisms."

Mencken once noted that "men work simply in order to escape the depressing agony of contemplating life." But he lived his own life (in the phrases of Justice Holmes, another tough-minded and high-spirited American sceptic) by "the divine folly of honor" and with "the senseless passion for knowledge." Mencken knew what made life worth living: the pursuit of ideals that may never—quite possibly can never—be achieved. He once wrote of Joseph Conrad: "One approaches him in various and unhappy moods: depressed, dubious, despairing; one leaves him in the clear yellow sunshine. . . ." After reading H. L. Mencken one basks in that same sunshine and for essentially the same reason: one has just left the company of a superior man and artist.

David Sweetman

The Short History of Failed Ideas

1 Franz Anton Mesmer 1743–1815

Sheep advance across their heft,
drawn by the rusty horse-shoe
pinned to the gate. Rich and poor
experience this animal magnetism,
those with stained wool hanging
in the filthy ringlets of slum children
and those in their elegant cardigans.

One despairs of cure, bloated on clover
it lies in its Tolstoy shirt
waiting for the true physician,
the shepherd with a sharpened stave.
The others go on, feeling the pull
this way and that, this way and that
drawn by the old rusty horse-shoe.

2 Wilhelm Reich 1897–1957

The man in the raincoat enters
the red orgone box, presses
the instrument to his head . . .

dring, dring—dring, dring—
and at once, the primal
mass-free energy strikes.

Renewed, he yearns to try,
any number will do . . .
dring, dring—dring, dring—

but the cure has taxed his strength
and all that comes is his heavy breathing . . .
hurr, hurr—hurr, hurr—

3 Alfred Wegener 1880–1930

With comic menace
The fruit on the sampans
is laid out military style:

the papaya's caveman club
or the durian's antique
mustard-gas grenade.

The tourists enjoy the joke
until one is offered a coconut
lopped like a temple novice

with milk that looks so maternal
they turn away disgusted.
They prefer a more abstract beverage

and only the coke-tins
with tear-drop openings
seem sad at their leaving—

for this is the new Gondwanaland,
the adhesive white world rejoining
the continents, the Yin and Yang,

snug as chops in a pan,
and the airport runways
are ley lines that link us all.

4 Carl Jung 1875–1961

Her first premonition, a feather on an egg,
was the last of Icarus on Daedalus' skull. Next,
a spray of bird droppings under the eaves

she saw as the molten wax, the day
was hot enough. In the end it happened
while walking home from church: an old cow

alone, unbidden, trundled up between
the narrow hedgerows—the minotaur in drag
defeated by the green labyrinth; lost in age.

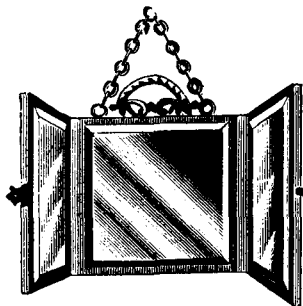
Suddenly she hates this well-read deceit,
she has seen the six-legged dog and why
it danced was clear, but terrifying, she runs

to the playground and swings high, clutching
the chains, Pasiphae in the unrelenting machine,
the rapid to and fro safely sheathed in myth.

NOTES & TOPICS

European Diary

Of Passing Scandals



Paris

USUALLY the sensational melodramatic questions of the day are confined to the boulevard press. But these days even the most sober and serious papers are putting breathtaking possibilities before the French reader. Did

President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing receive those valuable diamonds from ex-King Bokassa, and how did he dispose of them? Did Georges Marchais, chief of the French Communist Party, lie about his movements and whereabouts during the years of the Nazi Occupation?

The Central African scandal, a story which the satirical weekly, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, humourlessly pursued, is now to be taken up in the law courts as writs of libel fly furiously from the outraged members of Giscard's family. The mystery of Marchais' activities during the time when the Communist mythology had every good man and true fighting in the *Résistance* was lifted by the publication in *L'Express* (edited by Jean-François Revel and Raymond Aron, and published by Sir James Goldsmith, wearing his French hat) of several War-time documents which disclosed that Marchais had stayed on longer in Nazi Germany than he had previously disclosed... and as a volunteer worker.

Against such lurid happenings what do the other affairs amount to? How much time is left over to pore over the scandal which followed Cabinet Minister Robert Boulin's suicide, and his last letter accusing certain colleagues (members of the Chirac *Rassemblement*) of having organised a damaging whispering campaign against him? Here, too, the law is taking its course, with journalists lined up in a scrimmage against politicians.

I wonder how much such scoops, scandals, revelations and trials will actually change the Paris

political scene. Interestingly enough, none of the political parties appears to want to make any political capital out of any part of the exposés. The Socialists have been severely reprimanded by *L'Humanité* for deigning to show interest in such matters, although they and the Governmental parties have really been very reserved in their reactions to the Marchais case. Indeed, Jean-François Revel actually suspects that all the leading French radio commentators received special guide-lines to "play it down." As for Comrade Marchais himself, he has shrewdly offered to cooperate in any investigation of his life and letters, with only one condition—namely, that all the other leading politicians submit themselves to an inquiry looking into their War-time records and their peace-time bank-accounts.

Who knows but this rage for counter-investigation may lead to an inquiry as to whether journalists are themselves above moral scrutiny? (Documents are now circulating about the royal presents King Bokassa handed out to the visiting press.) I was reminded of the current Milanese play where charges against the terrorists, the *brigate rosse*, alternate with accusations of corruption against the judges and the economic leaders, the *brigate grasse*.

ALMOST by definition, "the latest scandal" doesn't last very long; each gives way to the next. Who still remembers (it was only three years ago) the assurance from Minister Poniatowski that the puzzle surrounding the mysterious murder of Prince Jean de Broglie (ex-Minister and businessman) had been solved and the guilty persons detained. Far from it; the police are still busy making their inquiries...

I suspect that when the storms on Left and Right die down we will still see, in the dawn's early light, the solid figures of the President and the General Secretary in their respective places. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has the unshakable self-confidence, the *désinvolture*, which goes with his protected life and brilliant career. His "aristocratic" family tree may be of more recent dating than he likes to pretend, but he does have something of a nobleman's traditional contempt for what are considered to be bourgeois prejudices, and questions are not answered nor charges denied. Never apologising and never explaining can be a sovereign posture which impresses.

In the face of charges that he had no legitimate militant background in the anti-Fascist *Résistance*, Marchais almost broke into tears. Petty-bourgeois sentimentality, perhaps; for there is no reason to believe that he would lose any working-class votes in the Party's proletarian strongholds simply because he wasn't, long ago, deported to Germany but stayed on, for one reason or another, as a

factory worker. The younger generation in France doesn't find the old quarrel about spotless records in the underground resistance very relevant any longer; and, more than that, any outside attack from the bourgeois camp has an automatic effect of "solidarisation." After all, the great old leader of the Communists was actually a deserter in 1939 (after the Hitler-Stalin pact nullified the Party's support for a just anti-Nazi war), and that never proved an obstacle to Maurice Thorez's subsequent return from Moscow, with General de Gaulle's permission, and to his service with honours in the first Gaullist cabinet.

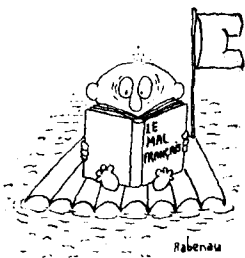
SCANDAL is, to be sure, a weapon in politics; but political interests often dictate an anomalous puristic or puritanical attitude on the part of the leading politicians concerned. If all are somehow involved, then all like to appear loftily above the battle. At the moment neither the Conservative Right nor the Communist Left wants to help the Socialists in any way, and it is the forces of Mitterand and Rocard who would benefit from any public dismay or outrage. If Marchais were to become a candidate for the Presidency, the defeat of the Left would be certain, a happy prospect for the Government's well-wishers. So at the moment, as the mud flies thick and fast, there appears to be an objective Giscard-Marchais alliance, denied with all the proper ideological indignation on both sides, but scandalous circumstances in Paris have always had an odd way of making strange bedfellows.

Once upon a time, as in the affair over Queen Marie Antoinette's diamond necklace, scandals may have been premonitory signs of a revolution to come. Nowadays they are only passing episodes, harbingers of nothing.

François Bondy

Of Many Tongues

Paris



THERE ARE now banks in Brittany which accept cheques written out in Breton. In innumerable "summer universities" Frenchmen are taking crash courses in the Corsican, Flemish, and Catalan languages. In the South of France there are some 8,000 school-leavers who have been examined in "Occitan." The 21-year-old Gille Quillever, from Plouarel in Brittany, is the first who has been

allowed to take his degree using his own language (except, of course, in one subject: namely, French).

Like the movement to maintain bilinguality in Alsace and to establish a radio-station in Flemish, and the drive to establish autonomy for Corsicans and Basques, these are signs of the times, amounting to a renaissance of cultural and national minorities in France. In the centralised French administration of Paris they have always been worried about "the unity of the Nation", and all such tendencies were repressed in the past, indeed even persecuted and punished.

Altogether there are some seven large linguistic groups in France: in the far North the Flemands or the "South-Lowlanders"; then in Alsace and Lorraine the majority of bilingualists; the Bretons; the Corsicans on their Mediterranean island; the Basques and the Catalans on both sides of the Pyrenees; and the large group (over 10 million) of "Occitaneans" in southern France, which was only recently "discovered" although it has by far the greatest numbers of the non-French-speaking areas. In the southern third of the country, to the line of Bordeaux-Limoges-Clermont-Ferrand-Valence, there are still several million Frenchmen who can speak their old "very Latin" tongue (also called Languedoc or Provençal, of which Gascon is still considered a dialect).

The central authorities in Paris are obviously loath to make even the smallest concessions. The official agreement concerning the teaching of Breton in the elementary schools is only being slowly put into practice; and the demand has been (at least for now) formally rejected which would inaugurate special TV programmes on a minority channel; this is held to be "discriminating" against all those Frenchmen who speak only French.

To be sure, many of these minority groupings have within them organised political factions with separatist ambitions; and these are not exactly greeted with equanimity in Paris, especially when they form alliances with the "green environmentalists" who may also be growing in influence, for there are the makings here of a common front to protect the birds and the bees, the rivers and the forests, the old languages and home dialects. And in particular the so-called "summer universities", with their speech courses and their cultural regionalism, underscore these tendencies; visitors are impressed by the crowded posters offering festivals of folk dancing and local theatre groups, often reported in "language columns" in the local newspaper, and reinforced by shelves full of "Occitanian" books (some 100 have now been published, with a total printing of 100,000 copies). I take these figures from a study made by the ENA (École Nationale d'Administration), which some of the Paris press, especially *Le Monde*, have been giving much publicity, coming as it does from within the precincts of this centralising anti-regional

élite body. The general conclusion seems to echo many of the alarmed theses of the minority groups themselves. Thus: "The Occitan language and culture are destined to extinction if the State does not come to their rescue. . . ." The political alarm in Paris, faced with the intrusion of demands for "autonomy" and even independence (in the Basque, Corsican and Breton areas), appears to be played down: "Cultural identity and the hope for a genuine cultural democracy can, for France, only be achieved by new forms of cooperation with neighbouring European lands, and without any danger to the national unity. . . ."

I have heard in conversations with various "linguistic minority" spokesmen, struggling to defend the border cultures, a variation of the old De Gaulle phrase, namely, "a Europe of the regions." This naturally implies a growing closeness among the Flemings of France, Belgium and the Lowlands, among the Alsations and the "Alemannen" on the German Rhine bank and in Switzerland and Austria, and perhaps even among the various Celtic groups in Brittany, Spain, and in far-away Wales.

But the fundamental question intrudes itself: Will the increasing linguistic consciousness of these

Linguistic Co-Existence?



Bern

BERNARD GRIENER, a certified translator, is trilingual. But after 33 years of civil service in the Swiss Defense Ministry, he has developed a deaf ear to two of his three languages.

"I will no longer acknowledge any communication addressed to me that is not in my maternal French," Mr. Griener said. The time had come, he believes, for federal authorities in Switzerland to "respect the minorities."

Mr. Griener, 58, an official in the ministry's "secrets branch," is one voice in a growing chorus of worried French-speakers. They fear their language is threatened by increasing use of German.

The debate has troubled the much-publicized linguistic peace in this multilingual country of 6.3 million people. German is spoken by about three-quarters of the population, French by about one-fifth, Italian by 4% and Romansh by 1%.

THE COEXISTENCE of these tongues has often been cited as a model of multi-cultured harmony. The Swiss Constitution recognizes all except Romansh, an ancient idiom spoken by a small bilingual minority in eastern Switzerland, as equally official.

A high-level revolt against the alleged supremacy of German has been pushed by Geneva's Willy Donze, a Socialist member of the Council of States, the upper house of parliament. Seconding him, the Geneva newspaper, *La Suisse*, commented that "Swiss-German imperialism, which is probably involuntary," may become "the No. 1 state affair." Mr. Donze has won support from some German-speakers for his proposal that simultaneous translation be provided in the upper house and at Parliament's 400 annual committee meetings. At present, only the 200 legislators in the lower house, the National Council, can get translations in their earphones.

Only a few do. Annemarie Huber, spokeswoman of the Federal Assembly, estimates that about half-a-dozen deputies from each of the two chief language groups regularly rely on the five interpreters hired for the plenary sessions.

LUIGI GENERALI, president of the council, uses Italian for "important statements" but also often addresses the house in German. Occasionally, interpreters are idle when a deputy speaks in Romansh—a "national" but not an official language—to his politely listening but non-understanding colleagues. The Romansh speakers act as their own translators, providing a summary in German at the end of their speeches.

Ms Huber agrees that quite a few deputies have trouble following in detail if a speaker discusses complex technical matters in a language other than their own. Only a few can match the linguistic talents of Justice Minister Kurt Furgler, a German-speaker who is also fluent in French, Italian and English—sometimes referred to by the tourist-conscious Swiss as "our fifth national language."

COMPLAINTS about "Germanization" are not new, but they have increased in volume with the increasing flow of paper in the Federal administration, where about 95% of all texts originate in German.

Most people agree that the translation service, which has to cope with almost 20,000 pages of official documents every year, is understaffed. But how can the government finance an expansion at a time of stringent economies?

THINGS ARE NOT easy, even for German-Swiss deputies. For the benefit of the French-speakers and Italian-speakers, the German-speakers are expected to use what the French call the "classical" German. But for the German Swiss, who are accustomed to their local dialects, this is virtually a foreign language, too.

The guttural dialects were occasionally used in Parliament before World War II. Some French-speakers say the dialects are hard to listen to, and most tourists from neighboring Germany don't understand them.

A.P.

various minorities be sufficient to maintain a lively border culture? The traditional cultural inheritance may well be recognised, but will that mean anything more than the postponement of its inevitable decline and extinction? Hopes and passions may run high, but so do they among enthusiasts of hobbies and sports. Earnestness does not exclude eccentricity, and I note that in Perpignan a local committee of regionalists has proposed a solution to the European Community's racking struggle among the official languages of French, German and English: viz., the elevation of Catalan as "the language of Europe."

C.V.

Syberberg Mourns for Winifred Wagner

Frankfurt-am-Main



THERE may have been a time when the death of Winifred Wagner would have elicited only cautious and laconic reactions in Germany, but we are twenty and thirty years on, and the *femme fatale* of tragic German culture has long been the inevitable

centre of controversy. Many young Germans, and not all of them on the Right, did not quite see in her the "fascist fanatic", and the powerful 7-hour film which Syberberg has successfully shown all over the world upset many conventional conceptions. Still, she remained to her recent death (on 4 March, at the age of 84, in Bayreuth) the dark lady of the national *Götterdämmerung*. She never took the trouble to hide her unabashed anti-Semitism. She made public declarations of her immortal loyalty to, indeed love for, Adolf Hitler (affectionately still called "Wolf"). She never seemed to be unduly troubled by the horrors of the Nazi régime. But then no one, especially a music-lover, can be all bad; and not a few liberals on the German Left came to appreciate certain sympathetic qualities in her Wagnerian saga of fire and fury.

Now she is gone, and is still a troublesome spirit. For what Syberberg's overwhelming film documentation achieved was the removal of a symptomatic German figure from the general oblivion where post-War complexes confined her, along with the *Verdrängung* of so many others. As a result we were confronted a shade more

realistically with "the banality of evil" under the Nazi dictatorship.

It was a curious and sinister quartet which Syberberg assembled for his various biographical films—Kaiser Ludwig II, the "mad monarch" of Bavaria; the "Wild West" German, Karl May; Winifred Wagner; and Hitler—as if he were a kind of soul-keeper of Teutonic messianic martyrs. His own soul is, of course, deeply involved, and he can't stay away from the subject and his own involvement in the whole narcissistic brew of romantic artistry, spiritual inwardness, and flamboyant showmanship. Within one week of Winifred Wagner's death Syberberg appeared in print with three obituary articles, in *Der Spiegel* (10 March), in *Die Zeit* (14 March), and in the *Sonntagsblatt* (16 March). Well, after all, he is an expert, and why shouldn't he peddle his expertise? What is unsettling, however, is the strange mythological cloudiness which begins to envelop him and his work among the shadows of the Third Reich. One has almost become used to his self-praise which, all things considered, was not his most disagreeable side. But now he has begun to speak out as if in some personal philosophy of history he figures at the centre of all things. And he came to praise Winifred, not to bury her.

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"So here we are now. An immortal has passed away, and has left only a monument which we can all take heroically. She is dead, and can no longer laugh that frightening laugh about that which cannot be spoken. . . . She gave the Germans who were lost in error and guilt their honour back, not by way of facts which we all know, but through her personality: a puzzle, with no solution. . . . She is a Shakespearean figure in the Myth of the Twentieth Century, matured in Germany, of and by and for this Germany."

In another passage he writes:

"Even her most natural enemies I saw on their knees, full of a grim fascination with this cunning and yet higher honesty."

All others shrink to dwarfs in the shadow of this giantess: T. W. Adorno, Hans Meyer, Ernst Bloch could only play small roles in the making of Wagner what he is today: the great emergent figure of the 19th century. . . .

One mustn't forget the role of Syberberg himself, and as he persists in reminding us:

"Crack of Doom"

London

So Winifred Wagner is dead at last: to the end unbowed, unrepentant, unforgivable. Truly, hell will find her a handful.

So did earth; perhaps the death of Richard Wagner's daughter-in-law will finally lift the curse from his house, but I doubt it. Whatever the words over the doorway at Wahnfried may say, its true motto is Macbeth's: What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom? . . .

Each year, there is a ceremony at Wagner's graveside, attended by all those of his descendants who are in Bayreuth on the day. In the BBC television programme made for the "Ring" centenary, the scene was filmed, and there stood Winifred, erect, silent, unmoved, her face a stone mask beside her father-in-law's resting-place. She stood, however, alone; son, daughter, grandchildren—not one would go near her.

And now she is dead. There have been no reports so far of repentance in articulo mortis, and I shall not believe them when they start to circulate. One thing the Wagner women have never known is weakness; Winifred when she was alive knew nothing to be ashamed of in admiring and following Hitler, and I have no reason to believe that she saw the point when she was dying, either. Indeed, I doubt if she has seen it even now, wherever she is.

She has most need of blessing, but amen sticks in my throat; and pity she would reject with contempt. Though I search my heart for a drop of charity towards her, I can find only Dogberry's words: "And presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave".

Bernard Levin
in THE TIMES (London)

"What would Winifred Wagner have been without this film in which she could present herself? . . .

"And so Winifred Wagner became, as Film, great and significant and important, a pioneer in another field, style-creating, and a fine example of what could be achieved beyond the commercial interests, daily politics, and narrow values of television. . . .

"Winifred Wagner and her Film could leave no better testament behind—a challenge for us all. . . .

"I believe that with this film I served not only us but her well."

It gets worse as he begins to place her—as Film, that is; his film, that is—in a great documentary tradition.

"Goebbels began it. He started a series of 80 such portraits, one with Winifred; and we, in our democracy, just have to face up to the fact that we have not even been able to comprehend and incorporate these ideas and ambitions of Goebbels which we should take for granted even without him. . . ."

What is this, only a bit of coquetry with the Nazi past? Here is a bit more.

" . . . And nevertheless, macabre as it is, we must be grateful to her. She was necessary, against our will, to fulfil the mournful destiny of the Wagnerian work. A thankless task which the Wagnerian gods of destiny demanded of her in order that this darkest line of the Wagnerian possibilities could be, hopefully for ever, taken *ad absurdum* into the spiritual catastrophe, on to the most terrible collapse of this devilish tradition of anti-Semitism, carrying everything along with it. Perhaps it was necessary to play through this pseudo-religion to play it through (*durchzuspielen*), to the very end, as politics (*staatstragend*) and as intellectual-artistic Utopia (*geistig-künstlerische Utopie*). And for this Winifred Wagner was ordained, with her own temperament and from her own favoured place into which she had grown, to co-direct the monstrous piece. . . ."

As for those millions who between 1933 and 1945 died a miserable death in gas- and torture-chambers and on battle-fields, were they for Syberberg only necessary in order to "play through" the Wagnerian consequences, to attain a proper comprehension of Bayreuth?

HIS SPIRITUAL AFFINITIES remain undisguised when he commits himself in matters which "Providence surely guides into the deepest chaos. . . ." We know where that comes from, and where that led to.

G. R. Koch

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BOOKS & WRITERS

A Conspicuous Absentee *The Decline & Fall of the Catholic Novel—*

By BERNARD BERGONZI

They are in the same Department, English, and talk books for a while. Michael's favourite novel at the moment is "The Heart of the Matter", and Polly's, "Brideshead Revisited." "But Greene's awfully sordid, don't you think?" says Polly.

"But Waugh's so snobbish."

"Anyway, it said in "The Observer" that they're the two best English novelists going, so that's one in the eye for the Prods."

THIS PASSAGE FROM *How Far Can You Go?*, David Lodge's new novel,¹ is precisely located in history. The conversation takes place at a party given by the undergraduate Catholic Society of a London University college on St Valentine's Day, 1952. At that time English Catholics still maintained the exclusive and defensive attitudes that were later to be deplored as "the ghetto mentality." All notable achievements by Catholics, whether on the battlefield—where Catholics were said to have won many more VCs than their numbers would warrant—or in sport or in literature, were triumphantly proclaimed to Protestants or unbelievers.

By the early 1950s non-Catholic readers were beginning to take "the Catholic novel" seriously. Graham Greene, it was said, had begun it with *Brighton Rock* in 1938, followed by *The Power and the Glory* in 1940. Then came Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951). Waugh loyally promoted Greene as "a Catholic novelist", even though Greene preferred to call himself a Catholic who wrote novels; in later years Waugh came to regret these efforts,

though he and Greene remained good friends. Greene, meanwhile, was discovering earlier French versions of the Catholic novel, and, as a director of Eyre and Spottiswoode in the late 1940s, had the works of the distinguished French Catholic novelist, François Mauriac, translated and published in England. Mauriac and Greene wrote admiring essays on each other's work.² The idea of the Catholic novel was further explored and defined in Conor Cruise O'Brien's mannered but penetrating critical study, *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers*, published in 1953 under the pseudonym of "Donat O'Donnell." O'Brien related Greene and Waugh and the Irish novelist Sean O'Faoláin to French Catholic writers: Mauriac, George Bernanos and Léon Bloy among novelists, and Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel among poets.

Critics, whether Catholic or not, were in general agreement about the characteristics of the Catholic novel. The novelist whose Catholic beliefs were explicit in his work was working against the grain of the novel form, with whatever advantages and disadvantages that could bring. The novel as it had developed since the 18th century was *bürgerlich*, this-worldly, realistic, empirical, phenomenological; unlike the romance, which it had partly replaced, it was not well adapted to miraculous or supernatural happenings. If religion appeared at all it was as a matter of social behaviour or ethical conviction. The Catholic novelists occupied a world that was less solid and complacently materialistic; it was partly transparent to other worlds, reflecting the flames of Hell or, less frequently, the radiance of Heaven. Their creations were not merely characters in a tale but immortal souls with an eternal destiny, either for damnation or salvation; if damnation seemed closer or more likely that was no more than one might expect, given the corruption of the world and the fallen state of human nature.

Yet nothing was certain until the end; moment by moment life was a battle between the opposed forces of Good and Evil; Divine intervention was

¹ *How Far Can You Go?* By DAVID LODGE Secker & Warburg, £5.95.

² Graham Greene, "François Mauriac", in *Collected Essays* (1969); François Mauriac, "Graham Greene", in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1973).

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always possible though quite unpredictable. Characters in Greene's novels, like Pinkie and Scobie, died in mortal sin and seemed destined for Hell. And yet, as the old priest tells Rose at the end of *Brighton Rock*, "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone—the . . . appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God." Unbelieving readers may have rejected the world-view but they had to admit that Catholic novels offered a particular intensity and recurring high drama lacking in their counterparts; man was poised, most precariously, on the isthmus of a middle state.

At the heart of the matter lay grace, the free and unmerited gift from God that man needs for sanctification and salvation. To show the workings of grace without violating psychological or physical credibility was a delicate business for Catholic novelists. In *Brideshead Revisited* Lord Marchmain is on his death-bed after a sinful life and years of separation from the Church; he has already once refused to see a priest, but on a second attempt, when he is *in extremis*, he slowly, laboriously makes the sign of the cross, indicating his repentance and reconciliation with God. Soon afterwards his daughter, Lady Julia, returns to the practice of Catholicism.

In *The End of the Affair* the once adulterous Sara Miles unexpectedly dies when she is on the point of becoming a Catholic. Then strange things are reported, which may be miracles though they may also have natural explanations; a small boy is suddenly cured of acute appendicitis; a lifelong atheist finds that a disfiguring birthmark on his face has disappeared overnight. Grace, we are invited to assume, has intervened in the natural order; Catholic readers, accepting the invitation, were edified; but sceptics might have felt that the principal intervention was the busy novelist's, making things come right in the end. There is, incidentally, a subtler and less obtrusive tracing of the action of grace on a Catholic soul in danger in a much earlier version of the Catholic novel, Mrs Wilfrid Ward's *One Poor Scruple*, published in 1899, and very popular for a time.³ This is an engrossing story of life among the Catholic upper classes, divided between a remote country house and fashionable *fin-de-siècle* London. Mrs Ward—a grand-daughter of the Duke of Norfolk—was intimate with the world of the old Catholic families

that Waugh later wrote about in more superficial and bedazzled terms in *Brideshead Revisited*.

ENGLISH CATHOLIC WRITERS were relatively restrained and tentative in showing the manifestations of the supernatural in the natural. The French were more whole-hearted; in Bernanos's *Sous le Soleil de Satan* the Devil himself appears to the humble country priest, Abbé Donissan. Greene has said of it:

How I wish I could have been one of those who read *Sous le Soleil de Satan* for the first time when it appeared in 1926. With what astonishment, in this novel unlike all novels hitherto, they must have encountered *le tueur d'âmes* when he intercepted the curé on the dark road to Boulaincourt in the guise of a little lubricious horse-dealer with his sinister gaiety and his horrible affection and his grotesque playfulness.⁴

Greene is surely wrong in saying that the Satanic apparition had no antecedents in novels, for Ivan Karamazov had experienced it long before.

Two points need to be made about the English Catholic novel, once instantly evoked by the names of Greene and Waugh. It declined quite rapidly;⁵ and the novels in question did not dramatise Catholic theology *tout court*, for there is no such single entity, but a particular and extreme theological emphasis, where religious beliefs were caught up with literary attitudes and conventions. After *The Quiet American* (1955), where the frame of reference is political and ideological, and the light-hearted and cynical entertainment, *Our Man in Havana* (1958), it became evident that Greene's Catholic novels represented a phase in his personal development as a writer between 1938 and 1951 rather than a lifelong existential concern. Waugh, too, did not attempt a large-scale Catholic novel after *Brideshead Revisited*, a work which, as he subsequently admitted, was permeated by the mingled nostalgia and anxiety engendered by the war, and where, as some dissatisfied readers had the bad taste to point out, Catholicism was intimately connected with the threatened *mores* and customs of the Catholic aristocracy; in Conor Cruise O'Brien's words, "hardly separable from a personal romanticism and a class loyalty." Catholic pieties and practices are conspicuous in *Sword of Honour*, Waugh's fine trilogy about the Second World War, but more as a part of Guy Crouchback's personal code and myth than as an element informing the whole work.

GREENE'S *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) disconcerted some Catholic readers, Waugh

³ Mrs Ward's novel lapsed into obscurity, but a reprint for which I have written an introduction is to appear next year from AMS Press in New York.

⁴ Graham Greene, *Collected Essays*, p.125.

⁵ There is a case for regarding Muriel Spark as a later practitioner of the Catholic novel. It has been well argued by Ruth Whittaker in an intelligent essay that is somewhat marred by a simplistic concept of Catholicism. See "'Angels Dining at the Ritz': the Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark", in Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (eds.), *The Contemporary English Novel* (1979).

among them, for it seemed to repudiate the values of his Catholic novels. Its central figure, Querry, is a famous Catholic architect, who has designed many churches and cathedrals; but he has lost his faith and retreated to a leper colony in what was then the Belgian Congo to get away from his admirers and recover his peace of mind. The equation "famous Catholic architect = famous Catholic novelist" may have been too reductive, but there were elements in Querry's thin, diagrammatic story that seemed to insist on it; character and author had received similar acclamations, even to the extent of having their pictures on the cover of *Time*. Waugh was badly shaken by the book, as he recorded in his diary:

"It emphasises a theme which it would be affected not to regard as personal—the vexation of a Catholic artist exposed against his wishes to acclamations as a 'Catholic' artist who at the same time cuts himself off from divine grace by sexual sin. . . . It is the first time Graham has come out as specially faithless—pray God it is a mood, but it strikes colder and deeper."⁶

⁶ *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (1976), p.779.

⁷ "The John Mortimer Interview", *Sunday Times*, 16 March 1980.

Greene briskly disposed of Waugh's objection in a recent interview: "When I wrote *A Burnt-Out Case* he said I was the lost leader because I'd exhausted my faith. But I hadn't lost faith, my character Querry lost *his* faith. Nothing to do with me."⁷ This sounds a little disingenuous, but there is no point in further speculation about how far Greene can be identified with his character. What is more interesting about *A Burnt-Out Case* is its early awareness of the new directions given to Catholicism by Pope John XXIII and, a year or so after it appeared, by the Second Vatican Council; it is surely significant that there are recurring mentions of a photograph of the recently-elected Pope.

Greene's Catholic novels proper had emphasised the separation between Nature and Grace, the exclusiveness of Catholicism, and the insufficiency of ordinary human virtue. In *A Burnt-Out Case* a more humanistic Catholicism is presented, particularly by the Father Superior of the leper settlement. Querry, no longer a believing Catholic, still thinks in the old categories, even if he sees them from the outside. Arguing with the Father Superior, he tries to insist on the separation between religious and human virtues: "You try to draw everything into the net of your faith, father, but you can't steal all the virtues. Gentleness isn't Christian, self-sacrifice isn't Christian, charity isn't, remorse isn't." But the Father Superior asserts the exact

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opposite when he preaches to his flock in pidgin-French:

"When you love it is Yezu who loves, when you are merciful it is Yezu who is merciful. But when you hate or envy it is not Yezu, for everything that Yezu made is good. Bad things are not there—they are nothing. Hate means no love. Envy means no justice. They are just empty spaces, where Yezu ought to be. . . . Now I tell you that when a man loves he must be Klistian. When a man is merciful he must be Klistian. In this village do you think you are the only Klistians—you who come to Church?"

This spirit has been prominent in Catholic theological developments over the past 20 years, stressing that all good things come from God, that nature and grace are interdependent, and that there is a virtual and implicit Christianity as well as a doctrinally informed and committed Christianity. All this is in sharp contrast to the dramatic oppositions in Greene's earlier novels. In *Brighton Rock*—a much better novel, alas, than *A Burnt-Out Case*—the lapsed Catholics, Pinkie and Rose, are conscious of Good and Evil, as opposed to the stupid, good-natured humanist, Ida Arnold, who is concerned only with Right and Wrong. For Pinkie Catholicism conveys, above all, a sense of the closeness of Hell; Heaven is only a pale, remote possibility, and a loving God is a conspicuous absentee from the world.

DAVID LODGE SUGGESTED in a radio interview in 1968 that the Catholic novel originating from Huysmans and developed by Bloy, Bernanos, Mauriac and Greene, was largely a thing of the past:

"I don't think that one can talk of the Catholic novel in quite such sharply-defined terms any more, partly because Catholicism itself has become a much more confused—and confusing—faith, more difficult to define, mainly in the last ten or fifteen years as a result of Pope John and the Vatican Council. The Church no longer presents that sort of monolithic, unified, uniform view of life which it once did."⁸

⁸ "David Lodge interviewed by Bernard Bergonzi", *Alta: University of Birmingham Review* (No. 7, Winter 1968-69).

⁹ *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 September 1978.

¹⁰ Martin Green, *Yeats's Blessings on Von Hügel: Essays on Literature and Religion* (1967), p. 74.

¹¹ Graham Greene, *Collected Essays*, p. 50. I have corrected a slight misquotation by Greene. These words of Eliot provide an epigraph for Anthony Burgess's *Tremor of Intent* (1966), which is a Catholic novel of sorts as well as a spy thriller.

More recently, Lodge, reviewing Mary Gordon's novel, *Final Payments*, described it as steeped in nostalgia for the vanished forms of authoritarian, exclusive Catholicism, even though revolting against them: "the undoubted distinction of its writing owes much to the high-cultural equivalent of the Catholic ghetto—the 'Catholic novel' of Greene, Mauriac, Bernanos, Bloy, with its characteristic fondness for aphorisms that are subversive of liberal, materialistic assumptions."⁹

Martin Green, in a hostile discussion of this tradition—himself writing as a liberal, humanistic Catholic—has remarked of its earlier French practitioners: "In the nineteenth century this Catholic sensibility was quite recognisably and even crudely a species of Romanticism. These novelists' work usually belonged within the Romantic sub-species, Satanic melodrama; rhetorical in language, violent in action, bitter and extremist in spirit."¹⁰

The Catholic novel in France and England was as much the embodiment of a literary convention as the enactment of religious experience. This is peculiarly true of Graham Greene; by the 1940s he had become a convinced admirer of Mauriac and Bernanos, but an earlier French influence seems to have been Baudelaire, who can be seen as both a Romantic satanist and a serious if heterodox Catholic moralist. Greene's Baudelaire was mediated by T. S. Eliot's influential essay of 1930, which asserted that moral Good and Evil are quite different from natural Good and Bad or Puritan Right and Wrong. In an interesting and revealing essay, "Henry James: the Religious Aspect", first published in 1933, Greene quotes Eliot on Baudelaire:

It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.¹¹

Greene's essay is more enlightening about Greene than about James. He argues that James was a naturally religious writer, despite his lack of overt Christian commitment; he had a strong sense of the supernatural, and an acute responsiveness to Evil; though, like Baudelaire and the characters in Greene's own subsequent novels, he was more aware of damnation than of salvation. Some of James's characters, argues Greene, *were* men enough for damnation: "both Densher and the Prince have on their faces the flush of the flames." So did Pinkie, who distorts the words of the Creed to "*Credo in unum Satanum*" and who dies violently: "He looked half his size, doubled up in appalling agony: it was as if the flames had literally got him. . . ." In this phase of Greene's work Catholic doctrine was, as Martin Green rightly

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says, incorporated into Satanic melodrama. It is a phase to which *A Burnt-Out Case* marked a formal farewell. Now, it has been suggested, Greene no longer believes in Hell.¹²

DAVID LODGE is a Catholic writer who started his literary career at about the time the Catholic novel was declining; he has retained a professional interest in it and has written studies of Greene and Waugh for Columbia Essays on Modern Writers. His work falls into two distinct kinds, perhaps as a way of conveniently coping with divisions in his own personality. His academic literary criticism—in books such as *Language of Fiction* (1966) and *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977)—is predominantly formalist, though making saving gestures towards the mimetic and representational aspects of literature. His fiction is predominantly realistic, though his later novels make gestures towards self-reflectiveness. Lodge's best-known novel is *Changing Places* (1975), a marvellously funny and inventive satire on Anglo-American academic life. It is also, as it happens, his only novel in which Catholic themes play no part at all. In three of them, *The Picturegoers* (1960), *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965), and *How Far Can You Go?* (1980), Catholicism is central. Here Lodge transforms the Catholic novel, as it existed when he was growing up, into something quite other: the Catholic anti-novel, perhaps.

His first novel, *The Picturegoers*, was published when he was twenty-five, but was written when he was only twenty-two. Though it tends to sentimentality, it is a remarkably mature and ambitious work for so young a writer. It is set in an unfashionable South London suburb and focuses on several lower-middle-class families or groups, mostly Catholic, whose lives and fortunes interact at their regular Saturday outings to a large neighbourhood cinema; at that time, the mid-'50s, cinema-going had briefly recovered something of its pre-war popularity, before succumbing to television and bingo. Kingsley Amis reviewed *The Picturegoers* favourably in *The Observer*.

The Picturegoers is a Catholic novel, but written without the nose-to-the-grindstone glumness, all sin and significance, that the phrase often implies. On the contrary, Mr David Lodge is on easy equal terms with his characters, seeing them and their lower-middle-class suburban habitat with a social eye, impatient of abstractions. He shows originality in his perception that a young lapsed Catholic, digging with a conventionally

religious family that includes an attractive ex-novice daughter, may be drawn back to the faith because of its associations, not with any heavily orchestrated splendours and miseries, but with ordinary, decent, cheerful domesticity.

Amis's points are well taken. In Lodge's fiction the Catholic characters are indeed ordinary; there are no dissolute aristocrats like Lord Marchmain, or Satanic teenage gangsters like Pinkie, or men undergoing spiritual intensities in exotic parts of the world, like the whisky priest or Scobie. The frame of reference is sociological rather than literary-theological, and the social eye is always alert. Thus, the lapsed-Catholic student, Mark Underwood, looking for digs in the house of a motherly Irishwoman, Mrs Mallory, soon registers that he is in a devout Catholic household:

The kitchen into which he was ushered confirmed his suspicions about Mrs Mallory's religious background: the evidence of the plastic holy water stoup askew on the wall, the withered holy Palm, stuck behind a picture of the Sacred Heart which resembled an illustration in a medical text-book, and the statue of St Patrick enthroned upon the dresser, was conclusive.

As one who grew up in something like the milieu described in *The Picturegoers* I find such descriptions disturbingly accurate. It has rarely been caught in English fiction, for the upper-middle-class converts who wrote Catholic novels had little contact with it, and the closest parallels are in Joyce's domestic interiors.

THERE ARE SEVERAL interwoven stories in *The Picturegoers*, but the central strand concerns the growing love between Mark Underwood and Clare Mallory, who has not long left the novitiate in a convent. At first Mark is interested only in having a good time with Clare, but love develops between them, and then, under Clare's influence but also, to some extent, because of the natural goodness of the whole Mallory family, he returns to the Church. *The Picturegoers* preserves elements of the traditional Catholic novel. Mark is at Mass with Clare when his faith dramatically returns, and the intervention of grace is presented in a Greeneish simile: "The priest stretched up, lifting the Host on high. Mark stared at it, and belief leapt in his mind like a child in the womb." There are other stylistic traces of Greene; of a minor character it is said, "he carried his failure before him like a monstrosity."

It looks for a time as if Mark and Clare are happily set on the road to Holy Matrimony and good Catholic family life. But God and the author have other plans: once Mark's faith returns it goes on developing in unexpected ways. Towards the

¹² Graham Greene, "God and Literature and So Forth" (interview), *The Observer*, 16 March 1980.

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end of the book he experiences an unmistakable vocation to enter the priesthood, and Clare has to be given up; she bravely and unflinchingly lets him go. Grace has undoubtedly been at its inexorable and mysterious work; but the author has also, in D. H. Lawrence's words, been putting his thumb in the scale. The lesson is that marriage may be a high Christian state, but celibate priesthood is a higher one; such sacrificial instances were familiar in the Catholic novel, particularly its French versions.

Not that Lodge shows any Jansenist hostility to marriage in *The Picturegoers*; quite the opposite. Indeed, the inexperienced young author was inclined to sentimentalise and idealise it in the manner of a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, and it is here, read in the light of Lodge's later novels, that *The Picturegoers* is most revealing. Mr Mallory is an English convert married to a Catholic Irishwoman, and they have had eight children. He likes looking at film stars and pretty girls in the street, and he still finds his auburn-haired wife attractive and, it is suggested, still makes love to her. At this point the text of *The Picturegoers* presents what recent criticism would identify as a significant absence, a lacuna, a *vide*. It seems that the couple are quite content with eight children and indeed have not had any more for several years. How have they arranged this—assuming that Mrs Mallory is still fertile—since contraception is firmly forbidden to Catholics? The text is silent.

THIS SUBJECT, from being an absence in *The Picturegoers*, becomes an obsessive presence in *The British Museum is Falling Down* and *How Far Can You Go?*. The former describes a day in the life of Adam Appleby, a Catholic graduate student of English Literature, who already has three children and who, notwithstanding valiant endeavours to operate the system of temperature charts and calendars required by the Safe Period, is haunted by the likelihood that a fourth is on the way. *The British Museum is Falling Down* is a very funny novel, where the hero's anxiety is constantly offset by farcical events in and around the Reading Room of the British Museum. With this book Lodge emerged as a gifted comic novelist; the early influence of Joyce and Greene was supplemented by that of Kingsley Amis, of whom he has written, "I suppose that, as a Roman Catholic, I could scarcely be more distant from Amis's view of the eternal verities. And yet I constantly experience a strange community of feeling with him. . . ." ¹³

The British Museum is Falling Down is a self-reflective novel, with taproots to Lodge's criticism. Adam Appleby is supposed to be writing a thesis

¹³ David Lodge, *Language of Fiction* (1966), p.249.

on the language of English fiction; a year or so later Lodge published a book on that subject. One of his aims in this novel is to suggest that the contemporary novelist has an uphill struggle to achieve any kind of original expression, since so much has been done already by the masters of the recent past. To illustrate the point, the narrative of *The British Museum* keeps lapsing into witty parodies of the style of 20th-century novelists, Graham Greene prominent among them:

Holding the two dusty volumes limply in his hands, he remembered the oozing wall of the urinal in the school playground, the tough Middle English paper in Finals, the fly-speckled oleograph of the Sacred Heart in the Catholic doctor's waiting room, and Barbara crying on the unmade bed; and the will to resist any longer ebbed out of him like water out of a sink, leaving behind only a sour scum of defeat.

In its Catholic aspects *The British Museum* reflects the hopes aroused in the 1960s by the Vatican Council that there might be some relaxation of the ban on contraception, which restricted Catholics who wanted to limit their families to the complex and unreliable Safe Period method. Officially the ban was a matter of fundamental dogma and immutable—all sexual activity had to remain “open to life”—but the topic had at least become discussable, and fresh arguments were presented against it: the traditional teaching was based on a narrowly biological view of sexuality, reinforced by scholastic philosophy and Roman legalism, and should be revised in the light of a more modern understanding of sexuality and human personality. Adam Appleby satirically expressed his exasperation by composing an entry for a Martian encyclopaedia compiled after life on earth was extinguished by atomic warfare:

ROMAN CATHOLICISM was, according to archaeological evidence, distributed fairly widely over the planet Earth in the 20th century. As far as the Western Hemisphere is concerned, it appears to have been characterised by a complex system of sexual taboos and rituals. Intercourse between married partners was restricted to certain limited periods determined by the calendar and the body-temperature of the female. Martian archaeologists have learned to identify the domiciles of Roman Catholics by the presence of large numbers of complicated graphs, calendars, small booklets full of figures, and quantities of broken thermometers, evidence of the great importance attached to this code. Some scholars have argued that it was merely a method of limiting the number of offspring; but as it has been conclusively proved that the Roman Catholics produced more children on average than any other section of the com-

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munity, this seems untenable. Other doctrines of the Roman Catholics included a belief in a Divine Redeemer and in a life after death.

IN LODGE'S NEW NOVEL the Catholic characters are older, sadder, wiser, and in some cases no longer Catholics by the time we reach the end of the book, which follows their progress from the early 1950s to the late '70s. It is a middle-aged novel, genial in some aspects, bitter in others. The geniality shows itself in the frequent interventions of the author's witty Fielding-esque persona, who freely comments on the action and refers back, on occasion, to Lodge's earlier novels: it is a highly traditional way of focusing on the text. The bitterness is apparent in the cold Voltairean irony with which familiar Catholic doctrines are discussed.

The novel opens, in February 1952, with a group of Catholic students of London University attending an early weekday mass in a gloomy church. There is Angela, pretty, blonde and very devout, reading French; and Dennis, a burly youth, reading Chemistry, not very devout, and only at the Mass because he is in love with Angela. (After a protracted, notionally chaste engagement lasting several years they will marry.)

Polly is a dark, pretty girl, already a bit of a raver, and destined to lose her faith and her virginity before long; she is reading English. So is Michael, a clever youth with a white face and dark, greasy hair, wearing what the author piquantly describes as a "wanker's overcoat." He is tormented by sexual temptations and a regular masturbator, haunted by women's breasts, even by the word "cleavage" in popular newspapers. He will grow out of this in time, grow up, and have a happy marriage, though still retaining an intense, voyeuristic interest in sex in all its aspects. After graduating he writes a thesis on the novels of Graham Greene, and references to Greene's novels as they appear over the years provide a subtext relating Lodge's work to the admired master of the English Catholic novel.

Adrian is a formidably dull youth in a belted gabardine raincoat, carrying a large missal; he is reading Economics; he never really comes to life. Ruth, a plain girl with a strong personality, is reading Botany; she is to become a nun and have an unexpectedly interesting life later on. Miles, an elegant homosexual, is a recent convert, reading History; and Violet is a pretty but plainly neurotic girl reading Classics; neither of them will achieve much happiness. Edward, serving Mass, is a medical student with a lugubrious expression, a dim though likeable figure.

The celebrant, Father Austin Brierley, is a young curate who acts as unofficial chaplain to the Catholic students. When the novel opens he is

narrow-minded and priggish, but he is going to change a lot, as Catholicism changes during the '60s and '70s, and to have a lively though uncomfortable priestly career. He becomes more and more radical, discovering new modes of theology and biblical exegesis and moving into secular disciplines like sociology. By the end of the novel he has left the priesthood and married, though he remains "a kind of Catholic."

LODGE SHOWS WHAT HAPPENS to these young people and their spouses over the next 25 years, mostly in English professional-class milieux, but taking in an excursus to Southern California. Their lives embrace success and failure, happiness and, in the case of one couple, more than anyone's share of tragedy. The reader is kept steadily engaged, but rather more because of the author's skill in sustaining a narrative than because all the characters are intrinsically interesting. The women are more substantial and have more potentialities than the men, some of whom are never more alive than when we first see them as students. As a temperamentally comic novelist, even though writing serious fiction, Lodge is given to a sharp typological placing of his characters on their initial appearance. The process gets them firmly established, but it also, I think, limits them and their capability for convincing change and growth. *How Far Can You Go?* is not a long novel, but even so it does not quite muster the fictional drive and energy to keep all the stories going at full pressure, and the narrative sags in places. But the book offers many novelistic satisfactions and the constant pleasure of recognition, as the sharp social eye registers innovations in society at large as well as in the sub-culture of the Catholics. Is this, for instance, the first time that an Open University Summer School, a bizarre mixture of intellectual intensity and sheer saturnalia, has been captured in fiction? *How Far Can You Go?* deserves the highest praise for observation, wit and intelligence.

EARLY IN THE BOOK Lodge describes the Catholic world-picture that all his young people would have accepted. It took the form of a great snakes-and-ladders board with Salvation as the name of the game; at the top was Heaven, and at the bottom was Hell; prayers and sacraments and good deeds sent you scuttling up a ladder; sins sent you slithering down a snake. The rules were complicated, but anything you disliked doing was probably good, and anything you very much liked doing was almost certainly bad, or at least a moral danger. This was certainly the frame of reference of the old Catholic novel, with its perilous spiritual dramas and ever-present danger of Hell. Lodge's

characters gradually come to abandon this world-picture, not by any conscious rethinking of doctrine but by a steady change in their sense of what seems credible. "At some point in the 1960s", remarks the narrator, "Hell disappeared. No one could say for certain when this happened. First it was there, then it wasn't."

By then many of the married Catholics had had enough of the Safe Period and were using contraceptives; when in 1968 Pope Paul VI, against expectations, reaffirmed the traditional ban in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, there was an unprecedented storm of argument and protest in the Church; some progressive priests were disciplined, like Father Austin Brierley; and Catholic married couples quietly went on using contraceptives, in increasing numbers, rejecting Roman authority in what they saw as a matter of private conscience. Between pages 114 and 121 of his novel *Lodge* turns aside from the story to interpolate an essay on *Humanae Vitae* and its implications that is far more cogent than the theological discussions I have come across. This issue was perhaps the largest internal crisis faced by the Catholic Church since the Reformation; the fact that an immense number of Catholic laypeople in the Western world decided to act like Protestants and do, in good conscience, what they thought was right rather than what the Catholic world-picture required of them had incalculable implications and consequences, in attitudes to sexual behaviour, and to the nature of authority in the Church. The charming but reactionary Pole who now occupies the Throne of Peter—his arrival is signalled on the last page of *Lodge's* novel—evidently wants to get back to a more dogmatic and authoritarian mode of Catholicism, with all the old doctrines reaffirmed. But it is inconceivable that the clock can be put back to 1952 or thereabouts.

LODGE HAS DESCRIBED the recent changes in the Church—intellectual, liturgical, pastoral—with faultless precision. What is largely missing from his book, though, is a sense of what motivates the religious life. "Why did we put it off so long?" his people ask one another, when they have decided to do the sensible thing and use contraceptives. Their conclusion, endorsed by the author, is that they were afraid of Hell. This fear was, without doubt, a common motive, particularly where sex was concerned. But I think it was also the case that many people positively wanted to do God's will, as it was presented to them by an infallible, teaching Church. Conservative Catholics would be entitled to ask *Lodge's* intelligent and articulate characters what they thought the Church was, if it was not an infallible teaching body. The answer they would probably get was that Catholicism was the highest form of Christianity, which was the highest form of



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world religion, but that they did not need to accept all the dogmatic apparatus that traditionally went with Catholic Christianity. Broadly speaking, this answer would satisfy me, but there are a lot of people it would not, John Paul II among them.

Lodge's people are decent and likeable and one intimately understands and sympathises with their struggles. But they are also *gens moyens sensuels* and, when all is said, a rather mediocre lot. The collapse of the Catholic world-picture lifted a great load of anxiety, but it seems to have left behind a shrunken world, where Catholics share most of the assumptions of a secular, hedonistic society, and religion seldom appears as a mode of transcendence or transformation. There are no

great passions in it, either: people are more concerned with sex—getting enough of it, of a respectable quality—than with love. This is in marked contrast to the old Catholic novel where, as Conor Cruise O'Brien has shown, carnal passion and divine Passion could become dangerously confused.

Lodge has moved down from those dangerous peaks and that rarified air to the flat, populous plain where most of us live our daily lives. If we are Catholics we shall discover in this excellent novel what we were and what we have become, and non-Catholics should find the discovery interesting too. What we or our children shall be, what Catholicism in the West, if it survives, is likely to become, are questions that it poses but cannot answer.

A Cold Wind Blows

Recent Poetry—By ALAN BROWN JOHN

NO EDITOR of an anthology of modern poetry, least of all a major new Oxford anthology, can ever hope to please most of the people most of the time. Nevertheless, he can live in optimism if he has managed to achieve not less than an alpha in each of the three areas where high marks are essential for an anthology representing a given period: his book needs to be authoritative, useful, and fun. The nearer the period his book covers, the harder his task will be. It is very hard to be detached about the poetry reviewed in last week's *Guardian* or printed in last month's *ENCOUNTER*. It feels safer not to tangle with the newest of new names, even though anthologists who have gone for each-way bets may have produced livelier books and fewer bores than those who put all their money on a choice of likely winners. All in all, the job calls for calm and heroic reading, infallible judgment, and luck.

D. J. Enright's *Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse*¹ is unquestionably fun. "Fun" in this context includes, as well as entertainment, a choice and juxtaposition of poets and poems which keep the casual reader turning the pages, a sense of excitement and things going on, an element of surprise. The arrangement of chosen poets in chronological order of birth (which does have its disadvantages in one or two other respects) provides some arresting contrasts and affinities to ponder: Dannie Abse's muted alarms giving way to Anthony Hecht's ironic formalities, Derek Walcott braking sharply

at Geoffrey Hill. But this is luck. The judgment comes in in raising the best or most entertaining poems from the work of some unexpected names; though Enright has been generally better at making the case for A. D. Hope, say, or A. K. Ramanujan than at giving the unacquainted reader the solidly best poems of a Larkin or a Berryman. There is a sense of things happening in the poetry of the period, which is indeed richer and more substantial than the cynics or the uninformed would allow. And yet that big bracket, "1945–1980", stretching from the end of the Second World War, ought surely to have enfolded *more*?

Enright has chosen to leave out anyone who was well established before 1945. This means a decidedly low mark for usefulness, since it excludes most of the large names writing, publishing and being read during the period in question: Auden, Barker, Betjeman, Bunting, Graham, Graves, MacDiarmid, MacNeice, Muir, Olson, Plath, Pound, Roethke, Spender and William Carlos Williams for a start. Any reader, in Britain or abroad, who has acquired some vague sense of the poetry written in English in our time through hearing about these names, will be puzzled, to say the least, by an anthology which leads off with Stevie Smith and Earle Birney—bizarre and engaging distant relations, hardly the inner family circle. Michael Roberts' *Faber Book of Modern Verse* began with Gerard Manley Hopkins, Kenneth Allott's *Penguin Book of Contemporary Verse* with W. B. Yeats: in order to be authoritatively convincing, an anthology needs to call in the important poets who stand at the threshold of a period and govern its practice and taste in poetry. Most of the

¹ *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse, 1945–1980*. Edited by D. J. ENRIGHT. Oxford University Press, £7.50, paper £3.50.

above long list of omissions bulked larger as living, practising poets in the post-War years than any except half-a-dozen of the forty names included.

The Introduction to a new Oxford Book ought to provide the authority for the choice of material. There is a recent habit of being a bit brief or reluctant about arguing a case, as if an idiosyncratic selection somehow validated itself with its own oddity. Enright properly writes at some length. He is convincing about his decision to represent American and Commonwealth poetry, witty about the excursions of academic critics into reviewing ("public import dwindles into private ingenuity") and judicious about such vexed, perennial matters as "difficulty" and "gentility" in modern verse. But it seems curiously inappropriate and negative (forgivable as it may be in a literary editor at the receiving end) to indulge the old, patronising grouse about the quantity of poetry now written. Test Match selectors feel happy rather than snooty if they can see cricket being played in every backyard.

WHAT IS MISSING, seriously missing in an important Oxford Book, is some attempt to grapple with the whole nature and quality of poetry in our time, to explain, assess, and affirm with chapter-and-verse, as Roberts did in 1936 and Allott in

1948. Over Enright's Introduction hangs an air, not of hope or celebration, or even modest defiance, but of weariness at the prospect:

Much as he might prefer to, it is hardly permissible for an anthologist to evade all mention of the principles on which his choice of poets is based. . . .

The best movement is one that doesn't move far in any direction.

A cold wind blows through the world of the arts, where supply is eternally in excess of demand. . . .

No wonder then that serious-minded readers have turned, successfully or not, to the novel. . . .

It isn't the stuff of which exciting, taste-forming rather than tasteful, anthologies are made. It doesn't carry much weight of editorial authority. The besetting sin of Oxford Books has been a kind of marmoreal irrelevance: go to them for children's verse and you find something grandly parental; look for light verse and your face hardens into a rictus of politeness at someone else's huge joke. They travel fast to the reference shelves, from which they may be taken down years later for the literary-historical interest of, say, Yeats's or Auden's

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(and the man) feels guiltily he has never wholly managed to re-enter.

W. S. GRAHAM is, with George Barker, the great survivor from the submerged "apocalyptic" generation. It's strange to think now that the "New Apocalypse" formed a considerable school in its own day, albeit disunited and leaderless (Dylan Thomas, its spiritual father, never really acknowledged its existence.) As early as 1940, almost at birth, it melted away into literary history; although heavy deposits of the apocalyptic style were to be seen in several of the smaller literary journals up to the early 1950s, and it's intriguing to remember that Harold Pinter began not as a playwright but as an apocalyptic poet influenced by the author of this collected edition.⁴ Almost any early Graham poem will provide a sample of the style; but with a difference, even then:

*Near farms and property of bright night-time
By mileaway dogbark how there is means to say
What unseen bargain makes heavier where I
walk*

⁴ *Collected Poems 1942-1977*. By W. S. GRAHAM. Faber, £8.50.

*The meanwhile word here of this neighbourhood.
Mileaway for answer tilling the fertile sky
Direction's breakdown assembles my own
heaven*

*Builds up, breaks the dead quarter into miles
With towering tongue of each discovering hour.
"Explanation of a Map"*

"Difficulty" of this kind is different from the obscurity nowadays of a John Ashbery, who can persuade you that you are reading ordered and logical statements. With Graham in the 1940s you know at once that you can glean mood and, possibly, location—but hardly ever a paraphrasable sense. The difference between Graham and the many who fell by the wayside—and the reason why we have this unignorable *Collected* now—is the sheer tenacity with which he built up these intricate and inscrutable verse structures. Craftsmanship is as much the key to understanding what Graham has done as it is to making sense of Dylan Thomas. No wonder the best of the apocalyptic poets went out of fashion, and stayed out through the long night of the Beats and the Black Mountaineers: Graham, for one, cared too much for the remorseless craft of making to bother with that kind of liberation.

That said, reading his *Collected Poems* is a tough assignment, best undertaken in short spells. The

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shafts of lucidity in *The White Threshold* (in "Listen. Put on Morning" or "The Children of Greenock") are soon obscured. One catches the general sense of *The Nightfishing* (1955) and notes the poet's increasingly sure ear:

*the skilled keel sails
The darkness burning under where I go.
Landvoices and the lights ebb away
Raising the night round us. Unwinding whitely,
My changing motive pays me slowly out.
The sea sails in. The quay opens wide its arms
And waves us loose.*

But even as late as *Malcolm Mooney's Land* (1970) we seem to be listening to the sound and fury of a private struggle with words which had been going on for thirty years by then: "I always meant to only/Language swings away/Further before me." Sometimes luck will pay out with words as it can with a one-armed bandit:

*King William the Fourth pays out
With a line of clattering oranges.
Garfield turns. His glass shatters
Its shape in our astonished gaze.*

⁵ *Poems 1962-1978*. By DEREK MAHON. Oxford University Press, £5.75.

*In the high air on thin sticks
The blanched rags in the wind blow.
The brass cylinder turns round
Saying I know I know I know.*

But it only pays out with poetry when it has been worked and waited for. The poet's and the reader's reward is in *Implements in their Places* (1977)—in the title-poem, in "Ten Shots of Mister Simpson", "The Night City." There is obstinacy and explosiveness still, but these poems, and "My Wife at Midnight", which concludes the book, are—at last—serene, tender and clear.

IT MAKES EXCELLENT SENSE not to have to wait most of a poet's lifetime for a collected edition, and Derek Mahon's *Poems 1962-1978*⁵ is a welcome "interim" Collected. It's in fact a generous, somewhat revised selection from his three out-of-print books; and impressive as at least two of them have been, it reads even better than they do individually. Mahon, like almost all of the Ulster poets, is devoted to form and structure: something is achieved by care, and order, even if his art may sometimes seem

*a dying art,
an eddy of semantic scruples
in an unstructurable sea.*

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Poetry must not join the disorder outside for the sake of raising a "bleak afflatus." In any case, it can sense the disturbance quite sufficiently inside "The Studio", where there is

*this quivering silence
In which, day by day, the play
Of light and shadow (shadow mostly)
Repeats itself, though never exactly.*

Mahon's affirmations are in the understanding and acceptance of a harsh landscape and an imperfect self. Through *Poems 1962-1978* speaks a sense of menace and alarm, and a counter-balancing sanity and compassion, which make the book a notable achievement.

IN *THE ECHO GATE*,⁶ Michael Longley has successfully brought together in one volume all of his earlier themes and styles in his best collection so far. A little older than Derek Mahon, his writing has often seemed to stand at a middle point between the reticence of his younger Ulster colleague and the play of fancy in the verse of his exact contemporary, Seamus Heaney: nature, ancestry, history and love being treated without either the reserve and austerity of the one or the metaphorical resource and brilliance of the other. But Longley has developed a flexible voice that can switch from disconcerting fantasy to plain speaking in a manner that is entirely his own: and *The Echo Gate* shows him in a possibly surprising role: as the most varied and versatile of the Ulster poets. The "Mayo Monologues" (compelling dramatic monologues) are a new and interesting departure for a poet who already ranges from the directness of bitter and poignant detail in "Wreaths":

*He ran a good shop, and he died
Serving even the death-dealers. . . .*

*Astrologers or three wise men
Who may shortly be setting out
For a small house up the Shankill
Or the Falls, should pause on their way
To buy gifts at Jim Gibson's shop,
Dates and chestnuts and tangerines.*

—to the tenderness and oblique daring of a love poem like "The Linen Industry":

*even in our attic under the skylight
We make love on a bleach green, the whole
meadow
Draped with material turning white in the sun
As though snow reluctant to melt were our attire.*

⁶ *The Echo Gate*. By MICHAEL LONGLEY. Secker & Warburg, £3.

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*What's passion but a battering of stubborn
stalks,
Then a gentle combing out of fibres like hair...?*

He may feel that his poems put down real roots in the shape of his botanical miniatures and sequences of "Lore"; but the scrupulous and slightly disconcerting assemblages of detail in "Household Hints" and "Dead Men's Fingers" ring truest.

THE ORIGINALITY and distinctiveness of Craig Raine's *The Onion, Memory* were obvious; so were the dangers. What was the route out of the maze of reckless and exuberant metaphor? Perhaps *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*⁷ comes (after less than a year) a little too early to say, and the title-poem pins its colours to the old mast well and truly. One hears objections to both Raine's celebration of innocence in "Laying a Lawn" (in the company of a baby daughter: "her little cunt's neat button-hole/and the navel's wrinkled pip") and to his examination of death "In the Mortuary" ("her stomach like a watermark/held up to the light"). The case is always the same: Why is he looking, unless for the sake of a poem? If there is another reason in these two poems I don't discern it; but it would be excessively grudging, and simply wrong, not to see another emphasis shaping in pieces like "Mother Dressmaking" and "In the Kalahari Desert": it feels as if Raine may be on the move in these poems, through space, and time, and towards concerns that are too close to him for the idea just to serve the appetite of the trope.

The New Fantastics generally would do well to take a look at the employment of metaphor in *Tidal Models*,⁸ if only to dissent from its careful service of concrete reality. This is John Birtwhistle's second volume—he is currently Writer-in-Residence at Southampton University—and in its exploration of "modernist" forms and procedures (an imagistic collage for Mayakovsky, a horrendous "found poem" about a "Cottage Gardeners' Society") it couldn't be farther from fashionable Martian Earth-probes. This is not an easy book: and the author ruefully prints a brush-off, from a critic who might have been expected to see the point, as an epigraph to the best poem, a sequence called "Haysaving." No need for this (understandable) act of resignation, really; passages like this from the opening poem of the set will come across to most readers:

*All the mowers have been pausing as I go by:
whole families will rest on scythe and rake,*

⁷ *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*. By CRAIG RAINE. Oxford University Press, £2.95.

⁸ *Tidal Models*. By JOHN BIRTWHISTLE. Anvil, £2.75.

*gaze as simply as plate-camera portraits.
Then on again, lifting tossing and raking,
the hay cocked into beehive shapes
capped with squares of sack or fishing net
weighted with stones, round in the jagged fields.
In raking light at evening they are impressions,
the bright edge not outline but haze
glowing with accidental lights and weeds.*

And more briefly: Elizabeth Bartless's *A Lifetime of Dying*⁹ is a moving contribution to the growing volume of poetry exploring work and social roles instead of abandoning them with relief at fifty-three; but also something more—the record of a personal pilgrimage through marriage, child-bearing, work and bereavement to the achievement of a limited but real sense of meaning in the act of writing. It's harrowing in content, utterly authentic in detail—and skilful in its means.

Patric Dickinson's *Our Living John*¹⁰ seems an unduly scanty collection (and may a lone protest still be raised at the thought of £3 for twenty-three paper-backed pages?). The title-poem is movingly modulated, the poems of place and landscape (Delphi, or Rye, or Camber Castle) are neatly turned but unsurprising, and I like best the chill of disquiet in "Rendezvous" or "At Sixty".

*If you walk backwards towards death
Like water flowing uphill,
Suddenly the world you'll never know
(Nor that world that it lack you)*

*Will rattle by in a rush
Of prams and the beautiful young.*

*Unhistorical Fragments*¹¹ is a first volume by John Whitworth: witty, exuberant, full of observant detail and randy bisexual love poems—but one wants to find something more *touching* among all the bluntness. As, for example, in Elma Mitchell's "Good Old Days" in *The Human Cage*,¹² an unexceptional poem which suddenly lilts into a genuine dance of death:

*The wishbone of my legs
Has changed their wishes' destination,
Shin repeats to shin,
Welcome, death, you may come in.*

⁹ *A Lifetime of Dying*. By ELIZABETH BARTLETT. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £1.95.

¹⁰ *Our Living John*. By PATRIC DICKINSON. Chatto/Hogarth, £3.00.

¹¹ *Unhistorical Fragments*. By JOHN WHITWORTH. Secker & Warburg, £3.90.

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Rising Scum or Talking Sense?

The Movement—By ANTHONY THWAITE

TO SEE ONE'S OWN youthful aspirations and statements become part of history, to read footnotes in theses which grant one a sort of place comparable with (shall we say) the Steward of Amenhotep II, is a surprising and somehow disconcerting experience for a man who considers himself to be, at worst, middle-aged. It's a phenomenon that recurs in every generation, of course. When I was an undergraduate at Oxford in the early-to-mid 1950s, many of us were fascinated by that lost epoch, the 1930s. Philip Toynbee's *Friends Apart: A Memoir of the Thirties*, recently reissued,¹ was first published in 1954. The girl who later became my wife reviewed it in *Isis*, and commented:

Nobody, thank heaven, has yet called the Thirties "fascinating." There is as yet no cult, and we cannot find easy object words to conjure them up. Charleston and cloche hat may do for the Twenties. For the Thirties the words are Guernica and Munich. We can still take them seriously.

This was true enough, except for the sidestep over "fascinating." We were fascinated, all right, as we were by Stephen Spender's *World Within World*. We bristled and prickled when people we took to be the Old Guard of the Thirties (Spender, Lehmann) criticised us for latching on to such tame slogans as "consolidation"; my very first contribution to *ENCOUNTER* was a letter in the May 1954 issue, taking issue with Spender over a piece he had published which seemed unfavourably to contrast our generation of writers with his own. But at the same time we had much more of a taste for that decade than we had for the 1940s, characterised by John Wain (in his famous essay on Empson, published in the last issue of *Penguin New Writing* in 1950) as that of "the punch-drunk random 'romantic' scribblers." (Mind you, we were ambivalent about Dylan Thomas—who came to Oxford in my first term, in October 1952, and enthralled an audience of 600 or so with his performance—and some of us were uneasily held by the saturnine George Barker.)

Now here is Blake Morrison, a good poet and

astute critic, born in 1950, taking a detailed look at that phenomenon known as the Movement.² By age, then, his vantage-point of the 1950s is much the same as mine is and was of the 1930s. His book began as a Ph.D. thesis at University College, London (supervised by Karl Miller, who as a Cambridge undergraduate editor in the 1950s and, soon after, as literary editor of *The Spectator*, had a good deal to do with the consolidation of the Movement), and it occasionally bears the marks of its origin, though the barrage of notes at the back is useful and scrupulously done.

MR MORRISON begins where one would expect him to begin: with that anonymous "literary leading article" in the 1 October 1954 issue of *The Spectator*, "In the Movement." Its author, the novelist J. D. Scott, at that time literary editor of the weekly periodical, has since explained that the whole thing was manufactured as a response to the urgings of the editor, Walter Taplin, that the paper needed a "circulation-building" article. The mystery about its authorship was long ago cleared up, though Ian Hamilton is berated by Mr Morrison for attributing it to Anthony Hartley in Hamilton's essay "The Making of the Movement"—blame I feel I should partly take on my own shoulders, since I was responsible for first publishing the essay in the *New Statesman* in 1971. I knew perfectly well that Scott had written the piece, and it was common enough knowledge early on for Malcolm Bradbury to identify him in an exuberant essay ("Some Contemporary English Poets") in a curious magazine called *folio*, issuing from the Department of English at Indiana University (where Bradbury was teaching at the time) in the Spring of 1956.

Bradbury said in his essay:

... what we have here is, I think, what might be called a respectable avant-garde, a new and necessary kind of avant-garde, in a non-intellectual and in many ways anti-intellectual society... the writer today requires a sophistication which almost compels a consistent study of literature, and the only place where this can be pursued as part of a full-time salaried job is in a university.

Blake Morrison traces "The Origins of the Movement" in his first chapter, looking at Oxford and

¹ *Friends Apart: A Memoir of the Thirties*. By PHILIP TOYNBEE. Sidgwick & Jackson, £5.95.

² *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s*. By BLAKE MORRISON. Oxford University Press, £8.50.

Cambridge in the 1940–1951 period, but then goes on to examine the backgrounds of the central Movement personnel—typically, “a provincial, lower-middle-class, scholarship-winning, Oxbridge-educated university lecturer.” In the decade or so before the “new universities” were founded, these writers worked in universities in such places as Dublin, Birmingham, Aberdeen, Belfast, Swansea, Reading. They had a social cohesion as strong as the upper-middle-class writers of the 1930s; they tended to despise both Bloomsbury and “abroad”, and lumped the two together; like several literary folk before and since, they distrusted “the corrupt metropolis”, where reputations were made.

Yet Mr Morrison is right to point out that their own reputations were made in London, and that their university milieu accompanied in several cases an impatient anti-academicism. Disclaiming class-consciousness, at the same time they wrote for a paradoxically anomalous audience—an élite of “common readers”, which Mr Morrison notices in the use of the pronoun “we.” Eschewing what Philip Larkin notoriously called the “myth-kitty”, they seemed to accept that there was “an interrupted English tradition” (Hardy, Housman, Edward Thomas, Graves) which circumvented the Modernist notion of a perpetual revolution going hand-in-hand with Eliot’s “Tradition.” In matters of belief, they were sceptical but not belligerent; and in a fine and sensitive reading of Larkin’s “Church Going” Mr Morrison produces ancestors and analogues (Hardy, Orwell, Graves, Auden, Betjeman, Norman Cameron, Roy Fuller) which don’t in any way diminish the poem but add their “testimony to the persistence of both the English Church and an English poetic tradition.”

IN ALL THIS Blake Morrison is a sympathetic literary historian, arguing from the work and not from received opinions about it. He recognises that his subject isn’t monolithic and that there were divisions from the beginning.

On the one hand, the Movement enjoys and exploits the sense of belonging to an academic élite; on the other hand, it disapproves of writing aimed at such an élite. On the one hand, it asserts the importance of university teachers and critics; on the other, it questions and satirizes their function. On the one hand, it declares that to write for a large audience is damaging; on the other, it declares that it is valuable and necessary. On the one hand, its work is dense, allusive, intimate with fellow intellectuals; on the other, its work is simple, “accessible”, intimate with an imagined Common Reader. Previous critics of the Movement have tended to emphasize one side or the other, accusing it of

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"academicism" or of "philistinism"; the truth is that the work of the Movement is characterized by a tension between the two.

Elsewhere, he shows impatience with some statements by Movement writers which I feel he is a bit too solemn about. For example, when Kingsley Amis reviewed Dylan Thomas's posthumously published *A Prospect of the Sea* in 1955, Amis concluded that Thomas will satisfy only those who want from poetry "something sublimer than thinking." Mr Morrison adduces that:

The use of this phrase suggests that Amis had been reading F. W. Bateson, who drew attention to its previous occurrence in 1805 (John Foster had applied it to Romantic poetry). But the intended insult surely rebounds: poetry *should* be something sublimer than thinking, and the Movement's failure to recognize this was to be one of the limitations of its programme.

Well, it depends on what one means by *thinking* or *thought*. All the Movement writers would probably have endorsed (though they might not have admired the choice of phrase) Eliot's formulation: "A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility." In the same way, he seems to recoil from "sense", or the way in which Movement writers used the word:

But "sense", the central feature of that English tradition rediscovered by the Movement, is not something which it is very easy to admire in poetry. When the Movement poets dramatize themselves as stubborn, pragmatic, dragged downwards by a "lump of English clay", when critics accuse them of failing to be generous or uplifting, when Davie, in his recent book, ponders whether Hardy and Larkin may not have "sold poetry short"—in all these instances one can see the same basic questions being asked: how can a poetry so concerned to unmask and deny also be in some degree affirmative? How can an empirical, obstinately "sensible" poetic temperament nevertheless be capable of providing its audience with some kind of faith (faith being a venture beyond what can be verified and proved)?

The questions are not just rhetorical, and Mr Morrison goes on to try to answer them in examining "Church Going." But one way of testing Mr Morrison's position might be to read carefully his own poems, which clearly have learned something from Movement writers as well as adopting individual postures; and one could try his sequence of seven poems, "Looking at Tower Blocks", in the May issue of *ENCOUNTER*, in which—it seems to me—*thinking* and *sense* are paramount, and admirable.

Here and there in the book there are some inaccuracies and over-ingenuities, but very few. Mr Morrison misquotes (or perhaps it is a misprint) a line of Empson's, which makes his use of "rather offhand and 'throwaway' last lines" more offhand than it should be. It should be

And learn a style from a despair.

In his reading of Larkin's "MCMXIV", it is more than fanciful to suggest:

And the "long uneven lines" are not just those of enlisting soldiers; they are (one might rather fancifully suggest) the "long uneven lines" of Eliot's and Pound's poetry, waiting to replace the "Domesday lines" of Hardy, Housman, Edward Thomas and their forefathers.

And surely John Wain's "Time Was" isn't "almost a pastiche of [Dylan] Thomas" but the direct result of a recent reading of Theodore Roethke: a shedding of "former thinking habits", true, but adopting a different model from the one Mr Morrison provides.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE GIVEN the book a stronger sense of period, and therefore made it a more considerable work of literary history, would have been a wider trawl in two directions: first, the immediate and continued objections to Movement

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work and, second, a recognition of how far beyond the chosen nine of *New Lines* (Amis, Conquest, Davie, Enright, Gunn, Holloway, Jennings, Larkin, Wain) the manner and attitudes spread—not from imitation but because the *Zeitgeist* seemed to dictate them. The objections were much more pervasive than Mr Morrison suggests in his glancing references to Somerset Maugham (“scum”), Edith Sitwell (“lifeless quatrains... [like] the cramped dimensions of prefabricated houses”), Spender (“Lower Middle Brows”), Charles Tomlinson (“The Middlebrow Muse”), Evelyn Waugh (“these grim young people coming off the assembly lines in their hundreds every year”), or Hugh Massingham (“Mr Wain and his fledgelings”). In *ENCOUNTER*, Hilary Corke let off a salvo at the “Bad Old Style” and Patric Dickinson mocked the Empsonian camp-followers in verses entitled “At the Villa Nelle.” At various times the old Soho mafia (George Barker, John Heath-Stubbs, David Wright, and others) lit contemptuous squibs. Herbert Read characterised the whole lot as “the twittering machines.” And in the United States such professional Anglophiles as Donald Hall and M. L. Rosenthal were dismissive.

As Blake Morrison makes clear in his final chapter (“Divergent Lines: The Movement after 1956”), a process of disintegration began almost as soon as the Movement had had its label attached. In fact the publication of *New Lines* in 1956 can be seen not as a concerted attack but as the signal for dispersal. The whole brouhaha about “the Angry Young Men”, yoking together John Osborne, Colin Wilson and various other emergents in 1956 with Amis and Wain, was—as Mr Morrison says—a journalistic invention, and one with much less justification behind it and much less head of steam than J. D. Scott’s “In the Movement.” For all its opportunism, Scott’s article had noticed something true, or provisionally true. The more delicate questions—such as how good was the work produced by the supposed members of the Movement—are not ones which Mr Morrison seems inclined to ask, and that is fair enough. Those who argue that this book wasn’t worth doing because his subjects’ achievement was minimal may mean that all close-focused literary history is a waste of time—a possible point of view, but not really a discussable one. Certainly this particular job won’t need to be done again for a long time.

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Kabul, in January



THE LAST PORTRAITS of the fallen leader Hafisullah Amin, discreetly packed in old newspapers, are being disposed of in the Kabul Foreign Ministry, and the Red Army is digging itself

into the frozen ground of Afghanistan for the winter. 85,000 soldiers, 1,750 tanks, 2,100 armoured cars, 400 fighter planes and bombers, and 200 helicopters have breached the historic barrier along the 1,000-kilometre border with Russia, where the southward expansion of the Czarist empire was once halted. From the military point of view the Kremlin has won "the great game"—as Rudyard Kipling called the century-long duel between Russia and Britain over the buffer state of Afghanistan. But what it has bitten off politically will require a lot more chewing.

"Now that our armies are in control of Kandahar and Kabul, the question is: What should we do with the country?" wrote the colonial officer Major Bellew in 1908, obviously concerned for the good of the Empire. Shortly before Afghanistan had been recognised as a British sphere of influence in the Petersburg agreement. Faced with the choice of "internal anarchy" or "a restoration of the disrupted dynasty of Emirs" or English rule "through an indigenous agency under our control",

the major recommended the latter. Moscow faces a not dissimilar decision today.

The Russians are not much troubled by the Moslem rebels whose resistance flares up at regular intervals (snipers shooting Russian soldiers, daring ambushes temporarily paralysing traffic on the main communication routes). The rebels are clearly on the defensive, too weak to endanger the Soviet troops, let alone drive them out. The men from the Kremlin are more concerned about the political consolidation of their act of aggression, about indeed the real purpose of their invasion: the establishing of a "popular" protectorate régime run by the Afghans themselves.

Babrak Karmal, escorted back to Kabul by Soviet tanks and installed as pro-consul, is supposed to make the near-impossible possible. The thick-set, beefy, 50-year-old lawyer and left-wing intellectual is not unknown on the political stage of Afghanistan. Together with his revolutionary predecessors, Presidents Taraki and Amin (who were both liquidated), the son of a general of aristocratic descent, he was one of the founder members of the Marxist "Democratic People's Party" (PDPA). As a law student he agitated against King Zahir and spent five years in prison. He acquired some governmental experience in the Ministry of Planning from 1957–65. He took on some political profile in Parliament to which he was twice elected, and of which he was a member from 1965 until its dissolution by Mohammad Daoud's Republican dictatorship in 1973. He made a name for himself among the radical, socially emancipated and yet politically frustrated middle classes and built up a following as a journalist and popular tribune. After the revolutionary *putsch* in April 1978, Taraki made him vice-president and Number Two in his new régime.

But his fall from power had already begun by June. Amin took over; Babrak Karmal was packed off as ambassador to Prague and was then accused of complicity in an "Officers' plot" and left out in the cold. From the Czech government hotel in Marienbad he moved to Moscow at the beginning of 1979, where he stayed until the Soviet invasion began a new chapter in Afghanistan.

ANDREAS KOHLSCHUETTER was for a time the last lone Western correspondent left in Afghanistan and then he, too, was expelled. His dispatches appear regularly in the Swiss weekly "Die Weltwoche" (Zurich) and the Hamburg "Die Zeit."

IT IS NOT a good chapter. "Babrak Karmal will never lose the stigma left by the Russian forces that delivered him politically—he embodies the nation's humiliation!" explains an embittered academic who came back from Europe with hopes for a national Communist régime after the coup in 1978. "When he was a member of Parliament he burnt the Koran—now he is letting the Russians desecrate our soil!", complains a money lender in the old town of Kabul. The people say of him contemptuously: "Not even his name is Afghani—Karmal just means Karl Marx Lenin . . .!"

With the slogan of reconciliation, "National Unity and Fraternity", Babrak Karmal, who now combines in his single person the highest offices of state, government and party, is seeking to inaugurate the "new phase of the April revolution." This, supposedly, will introduce more reason, moderation, and take the wishes of the people more into consideration. With all the means at his disposal he must try to broaden the political basis of his régime, and reduce internal friction—"to correct the dangerous and tragic errors of the past and solve the crisis", as he put it in his first message of greeting to the nation. The Kremlin leaders made it plain that this was his first task. Amin's senselessly doctrinaire, revolutionary strong-arm methods—his reign of police terror which so embittered the people, and his endless purges—did not suit the Kremlin's plans.

This is consistent with Babrak Karmal's own political philosophy. The "*Partsham*" (Flag) faction inside the PDPA, which he led, always distinguished itself through pragmatism, realism, and political patience, unlike the "*Khalk*" (People's) group of Taraki and Amin. It was for this reason that in 1973 the party split over the strategy—which the *Partsham* supported—of making an "historic compromise" with the Mohammad Daoud régime and participating in the new Republic's government. It was not until the autumn of 1978, after Babrak and his supporters had been excommunicated, that the hasty revolution, led exclusively by the *Khalk* group, got under way and finally brought down the régime.

The make-up of Babrak's team demonstrates his attempts to broaden his political base and integrate the nation. For the first time there are non-party members in the cabinet who qualify for their posts through some expertise and experience. And the military leaders who were left out in the cold by Taraki and Amin have regained influence. They occupy five out of a total of twenty ministerial seats; four out of seven members in the Supreme Revolutionary Council, the highest executive body, are officers.

In occupied Kabul the tone set by the government is one of "reconciliation", without any revolutionary socialist bombast. The red tide of propaganda slogans and banners has disappeared

from the streets in all but a few places. "In the circumstances, we do not regard it as our initial task to drill Socialism into people, but rather to strengthen the pillars of political and social progress", Babrak Karmal announced right at the beginning, and at the same time promised "special consideration for the particular problems of modern Afghanistan." He declared that "respect for the family unit", "the principle of private property", and above all "deep respect for the holy religion of Islam" were to be central principles of the new constitution he was in process of drawing up.

A few areas of foreign trade have already been demonopolised and denationalised; the return of confiscated property has begun. Party and government announcements are once more being made "in the merciful and bountiful name of Allah." The state flag, red since October, is going to be changed, "Afghanised" and "Islamised." Babrak Karmal is emphasising "freedom to establish progressive and patriotic parties." The immediate release of over 4,000 surviving political prisoners from the greatly feared dungeon of Pul-i-Charki near Kabul, and the promise of no further police terror or emergency powers (which has so far been kept), have not gone unnoticed even in circles hostile to the régime.

BABRAK KARMAL finds himself in a vicious circle: he still needs the Soviet troops to consolidate his weak régime and rebuild the Afghan army. However, "national reconciliation" and "pacification" can succeed only if the occupying forces withdraw. This dilemma is reflected among the Kabul middle classes who are drawn to Babrak Karmal as party friends, or ideological sympathisers, or realists with nationalist views. Members of Karmal's *Partsham* group are simply terrified by offers of state posts, "because we are afraid either to say yes or to say no . . ." An intellectual educated in the West who declined a



post: "I would have liked to have helped, I feel very close to the *Partsham* people, but I cannot and will not take on any responsibility for the Russian presence...." An officer's wife from a rich and cultured family: "We prayed for Karmal's return, but now, despite everything, we've lost our appetite. They've set in front of us a steak smeared with Russian spittle...."

The new man in Kabul is meeting resistance even inside "the Democratic People's Party." The number of Afghani party comrades is small enough as it is. The membership is a state secret. Western sources estimate it at "7,000-10,000 at the most"—about 3,000 are *Partshamis*—out of a population of over 15 million. For both factions, the *Khalkis* and the *Partshamis*, the revolution was more than they could handle. In Kabul the first "night letters" are beginning to appear again, pamphlets pushed under doors or thrown over garden walls at night, in which *Partshamis* themselves are beginning to criticise strongly the Russian invasion. Furthermore, the two factions are wrangling with each other again. The deposed *Khalkis* accuse the others of inviting the Russians into the country and blame them for the whole miserable situation. The *Partshamis* show no great desire to suppress their feelings of revenge towards the *Khalkis*, or to join forces with those people who locked them up and tortured them under Amin and Taraki.

These internal wranglings and tensions reduce the effectiveness of the tiny revolutionary party, and make the shortage of personnel more acute. Babrak Karmal has no reliable reserves at his disposal whom he could quickly mobilise for difficult political or administrative tasks. Along with the army, an exhausted and demoralised civil service must be artificially revived by an infusion of Russian blood. Ten days after the invasion an estimated force of 4,000 additional experts was drafted into the country without having to submit to customs or visa formalities. It was as if the Soviet Republic of Afghanistan had already been declared.

In the bazaar wild rumours are already circulating about the imminent replacement of Babrak Karmal. They say that the Kremlin leaders are dissatisfied with the governor they have imported. He is not uniting the party; he hasn't got the people behind him. One thing is certain—Russians have the whip-hand here. It is they who hire and fire government and party leaders. But it is also clear that the choice of Afghani leaders open to the occupying powers is extremely limited.

At one time, the Russians were banking on "a Finland in Central Asia" in revolutionary Afghanistan, which in the long term would secure "legitimate influence" for them and at the same time give them free space on their southern flank. They are indeed enjoying complete influence, but

they are forced to accept all the risks that this entails. A former US ambassador in Kabul once observed shrewdly: "It has always been easier for foreign infiltrators to get into Afghanistan than to get out again unscathed...."

2. "Allahu-Akhbar!"

Kabul, in February

THE RUSSIAN TANK OFFICER put both hands over his ears. The steel hatch closed, the motor droned, and the gun-turret turned towards some unsighted target. The enemy in the night was a full-throated cry from hundreds of thousands of souls, a furious scream from the whole of Kabul against the Soviet occupying forces: "*Allahu-Akhbar, Allahu-Akhbar, Allahu-Akhbar*"—"God is great." Human voices of every timbre—chirping, shrill, deep, hoarse—united under the cold stars in primeval uproar. It flowed in a wild surge which broke all banks, sweeping everything along with it. It poured out of the central hills of Kabul, from the wretched clay huts of the Shi'ite Hazaras, down to the plain and the other parts of the city which echoed it back to the hills like the flux and reflux of a mighty tide.

They stood on their flat roofs, they leaned from windows, they gathered in inner courtyards, united spontaneously into choirs in the streets and alleys: "*Allahu-Akhbar*." Many used loud-hailers and microphones. Not only hands, but parts of stove-pipes were cupped to their mouths. Children made their own loudspeakers out of old tin cans: "*Allahu-Akhbar*." The choir roared the words over the walls of the houses until they were answered. Cars, stopped by small bands swinging wooden clubs, were allowed through only when occupants gave the password: "*Allahu-Akhbar*." On 21 February this primal scream for freedom was sustained for four hours throughout Kabul. It pierced one to the depths, it penetrated the armour-plating of the tanks. And it could not be shot down. "*Allahu-Akhbar, Allahu-Akhbar, Allahu-Akhbar*."

THE MULLAHS OF KABUL had called for passive resistance and the closure of shops some days before. One announced at evening prayers: "We will be victorious—we will drive out of Afghanistan those who have no Faith and no Book." From the overland buses—the "rolling market-places"—news of protest actions in other cities reached Kabul. Handwritten leaflets were circulated from the mosques.

"The brave citizens of Kabul declare Holy War against the Unbelievers, against the oppression of the Soviet aggressors, these inexorable enemies of Islam. Every man must die one day.

Why then fear a glorious death? We are called upon to defend our country and our womenfolk. Whether we kill our enemies, or die in the fight against them, we shall gain Paradise for ourselves. If Holy War is impossible, we will fulfil our religious duty through demonstrations and strikes. . . .”

The “faithful brothers of the city of Kabul” were exhorted in these anonymous tracts to begin the actions of civil disobedience “on the Second Watch 1358”—on 21 February 1980. In fact, as specified in a widely distributed “night letter” circulated on the Wednesday, they were to begin with *Allahu-Akhbar* protest chants and a week-long bazaar strike from which only bakers, butchers, and greengrocers would be excepted. Emissaries appeared in the bazaar areas of Kabul, urging dealers and shopkeepers to obey the strike call and warning them of reprisals against life and property if they did not comply.

The exhortations were successful. Since last Thursday the bazaar, usually crammed with hustling dealers and profiteers, has lain idle. The shops, the booths, the stalls are barred and bolted, not only in the legendary Chicken Street and the labyrinthine bazaar around the Maiwan boulevard,

but also in the outskirts of the city. As in recent weeks in Herat, in Mazar-i-Sharif, Pul-i-Khumri and Charikar, the mass of ordinary people threw down the gauntlet at the booted feet and tanks of the Russian régime.

AT THE DEFENCE MINISTRY, on the 62nd anniversary of the Red Army, speeches about the “upright, benevolent, and selfless” nature of the Soviet invasion abounded, while the people’s anger against “Russian imperialists and their traitorous lackeys” was rising. In the Soviet embassy, champagne corks popped to celebrate the day while the Soviet tanks rattled through the streets of the capital, where the night’s unrest was simmering. Flares exploded, illuminating the battleground of Kabul to the sound of gun-fire.

The Soviet occupying forces replied to the spectacular mass demonstration with an oppressive show of power. Kabul became a theatre of war and experienced a bloody Friday.

“Now you can see our strength, and the feebleness of the Communists”, crowed a student who had rescued me from the clutches of an “*Allahu-Akhbar*” mob armed with iron pipes and crowbars in the Karte-Parwan quarter. I had been mistaken for a Russian, hauled out of my taxi, and

“Friendly Assistance”

New Delhi, May 9

FIERCE FIGHTING is raging for the second week between Soviet forces and Afghan rebels in Afghanistan’s Ghazni province 100 miles southwest of Kabul, near the scene of a massacre of thousands of villagers in late April.

The Russians launched an offensive on Tuesday with 600 to 900 tanks and armored vehicles, helicopter gunships and MiG jets against 10,000 Moslem rebels gathered in the Jughatu region of Ghazni. The figures and locations came from travelers who arrived in India from Afghanistan and

from reports of a Kabul source who in the past has proved reliable.

The informant in Kabul quoted information reaching there that about 5,000 Afghans were slain in an April 26–29 bombardment, shelling and strafing of Andar and Shilgar villages, 10 miles north of Ghazni, the provincial capital. Most of the dead were women and children because the men were fighting in rebel units, some of them the target of this week’s offensive.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, 10 May

MARSHAL DMITRY USTINOV, Soviet Defence Minister, attacked America and China yesterday and stressed that his troops were staying in Afghanistan.

He used the celebrations marking the 35th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany to accuse Washington and Peking of following aggressive policies. He said America was trying to start a new cold war and was busy creating “centres of armed conflict throughout the world.”

China and the USA were accused of carrying on an “undeclared war” against Afghanistan where the Marshal said Soviet troops would remain and continue to provide “friendly assistance.”

DAILY TELEGRAPH

beaten with sticks and fists. The youthful rescuer proceeded to sit on the bonnet of the car, and clear a path for his "friend from America" with raised fist and cries of "*Allahu-Akhbar*." On leaving, he explained: "We'll get rid of the Russians through our strength—with your help! We'll show them Afghanistan doesn't belong to the Eastern bloc!..."

The Soviets could hardly allow such euphoria to spread. They dealt the counter-blow before the sun had barely risen above the heavily snow-laden mountain peaks around the upper valley of Kabul. The MiG-21 jets and Suchoi-7 low-strike fighters thundered low over the city from their Soviet bases. They went back and forth until late afternoon, without firing. They were intended only to frighten, to silence the "*Allahu-Akhbar*" protest marches with their deafening noise. But they did not succeed for long. The Afghani resistance didn't give up so easily. They flocked out of their huts along the broad Salang-Wat that leads into the city centre, and joined forces with the masses streaming in from the edge of the city. They were uncoordinated, without a plan, but the common aim of their march was plain: "*Allahu-Akhbar*! Death to the Russians, death to Brezhnev, death to Lenin, death to Babrak Karmal!"

The reckless boldness of this crowd was impressive, but also alarming. They defied the Russian fighter-planes and were not deterred even by the Mi-24 gunship helicopters circling overhead heavily armed with rockets. They marched straight ahead, into the inner city, even when things turned to deadly earnest there and the Afghani troops (who had been brought up in tanks) opened fire. The Mi-24s, flown by Russian pilots, fired their first salvos into the Shi'ite quarter at Demasang, where snipers with ancient rifles were shooting at soldiers and policemen. Heavy machine-guns were brought into action around the Soviet embassy. Helicopters attacked targets over towards the Soviet garrison at Darulalman. On the main road to Kandahar stood a burning lorry. Below the Intercontinental Hotel, a violent shoot-out was going on next to the grain-silo. In the Khanga district, where rebels had established themselves in the vicinity of the barracks of the 7th Afghani Infantry, I could hear the dull thud of Russian tank-shells and gunship rockets. Only now, confronted by this war machine rolling towards them at the command of the Russian generals, did the still enthusiastic Afghanis begin to realise how helpless and impotent they were. Downcast, most of them filed silently back to their homes.

AN AFGHANI CYCLIST on whose luggage-rack I rode, my legs tucked up behind me, seemed completely unaffected by the whole affair. His trousers

flapping, he pedalled on tirelessly. After a long tour from one crisis area to another, he finally allowed me to jump off and take cover in a muddy filthy trench. He cycled on, past two lifeless bodies stretched out in the road, and straight across the deserted junction next to the Ministry of Education which was racked by gunfire. So stoical and sure of himself, as if his turban were a steel helmet and the Paradise to which he clearly aspired lay just around the corner.

THE BABRAK RÉGIME did not react to the storm of protest from the population of Kabul. No member of the Government or Party leadership dared show his face on television during the days of crisis. Instead, the public was presented for the fourth time with a three-week-old speech by Babrak Karmal and for the third time watched the release of Amin's political prisoners, which had taken place almost two months before. Naturally, the blame for the mass unrest was laid on "the imperialist bloodsucker America", which, according to an official radio announcement, with the help of China, Pakistan, England and the Israeli Zionists "has sent armed terrorists to Afghanistan." As was customary under Amin, random Pakistanis, 16 in number, were arrested as "agitators and instigators", together with an unnamed American. More and more frequently loudspeaker vans cruised the streets urging the population "not to be afraid" but to help the government "fight against imperialists and Zionists, just as the Afghani people once fought against the English."

The Government, however, cannot visibly or credibly produce the external enemy necessary for such national mobilisation and solidarity. Some 17 "foreign agents" are not quite sufficient to win the support of the Afghanis for "a great war on behalf of the fatherland." People laugh at their TV sets and radios, and switch off. As in Kandahar and Herat, the people's uprising in Kabul spelled it out. Babrak Karmal wishes to blame foreign powers for the resistance which grows in the heart of his people; the "enemies of the people" whom he accuses are the Afghan people themselves. The "external threat" theory for the invasion cannot be justified, and the Soviet occupying forces are scarcely likely to withdraw, even if the border with Pakistan were to be sealed off by international agreement. They will not allow themselves to be beaten off, but they are drawn more and more into Afghani domestic affairs in an attempt to save face and to preserve the régime they themselves have installed, which is incapable of standing or acting by itself. Consequently, they have now occupied all strategic points in Kabul and shown the Russian presence openly—at electricity plants and

waterworks, bridges, at the grain silo, the main transmitter and the Kandahar road. Previously, they had not done this. The few Afghani tank and police units left intact (which in the past few days were drafted in an effective and quite disciplined fashion) are still playing a prominent part in Kabul, whereas in Herat, according to eye-witnesses, Afghani national forces were actually fraternising with demonstrators.

But this does not alter the impression of a tightening noose. Babrak Karmal occupied Kabul with Soviet divisions, and he has been rejected by the Afghan nation. Since his position in office is disputed, the Russians become even more indispensable.

THE UNCOMPROMISING AND STUBBORN resistance has led to the imposition of martial law in Kabul, to drastic limitations on speech and assembly, to a massive new wave of arrests and to a relapse into police-state methods. For the Russians and the Babrak régime, the temptation to reintroduce harsh military strong-arm tactics has doubtless grown. The population shows no readiness to accept a political compromise, and passive resistance has spread like wildfire through the cities. The writing on the wall becomes increasingly clear, and indicates that active resistance is imminent, with armed city dwellers and tribes united in a broad popular front.

The students in Kabul wait for the snows to melt in the spring before they unite with isolated tribal rebels. In the meantime, they learn to mount explosive charges and set fuses. Two teachers move with their children and household effects to a cave encampment in the north of Laghman province where their husbands are undergoing tightly organised weapons training in the mountains. A university lecturer and a leading official in the Ministry of Planning desert their posts in order to unite various resistance groups in their native Kandahar, thence to join up with the rebel groups in the border province of Zabul which are armed and financed from the exile centre of Peshawar in Pakistan.

Over the roofs of Kabul, guided by the clumsy hands of the children, fly the *Gudiparans*, kites which rise steeply and fall abruptly, like the short-lived hopes and dreams of the Afghans rearing up against foreign domination. From his mountain retreat, the wise old Sufi Ansari once advised these kite-flyers to keep a cool head, to calculate with precision the up-currents, the down-draughts, and the speed of their kites in order to keep these *Gudiparans* aloft at a constant height. The Sufi died a long time ago, but his teaching still remains valid, especially in occupied and hot-tempered Afghanistan.

3. Retreat & Disarray

The Kunar Valley, March

“LET ME FIRST PRAY and find peace, then I’ll tell you the whole story.” Asil Khan’s strained face testifies to the hardships he has undergone. Last August, together with the whole Afghani brigade from Asmar in the Kunar Valley, the 32-year-old lieutenant went over to the Islamic rebels. Until a few days ago he was leader of 700 guerrillas in the Shigal sector on the banks of the Kunar. There they were overwhelmed by the latest Russian Kunar offensive, and, sustaining heavy losses during the fierce fighting, were driven out from their positions and forced to flee.

With a rebel troop of ten men in ragged army fatigues and dilapidated footwear, armed with single-shot rifles fit only for a museum and three Kalashnikov guns plundered from the Russians, Asil Khan forced his way through the Russian lines in a series of exhausting night-marches. Here, on the way up the Ghakhai Pass (the only escape route to Pakistan still open in this region), in Adshab Shagai, a village that was deserted by its inhabitants after attacks by Soviet helicopters and MiG hunter-jets, he intends to rest for a while. In the damp clay hut, filled with the acrid smoke from an open fire, which serves the troops of the *Hezbi-Islami* (Islam Party) as a hideout, the battle-weary holy warriors bow low and with devotion towards Mecca.

“The Russians attacked us as if we were super-strong Americans. We only had to move and immediately there was a rocket-firing helicopter overhead. We were powerless against them. . . .” We are sitting on the ground around the warm fire, dipping flat corn bread into an oily sauce and drinking green tea.

The basic pattern of the Russian strategy was the same everywhere: tanks moved directly against the rebel positions up the Kunar Valley road from Shiga Serai, while to the rear, under the covering fire of strike helicopters and MiG-23s, transport helicopters landed light tanks and dropped in paratroopers at strategically important points. The guerrillas were quickly hemmed in, their mobility and lines of escape additionally hampered by the natural obstacle of the Kunar river.

Asil Khan has to admit: “They surprised us. Russian choppers and jets had been flying over our villages and positions every day for weeks, usually without opening fire. And then suddenly they attacked with enormous fire-power from all sides. We hadn’t reckoned on that.” One of Asil Khan’s comrades interrupts: “And these weren’t Afghani soldiers, our Islamic brothers who shot in the air and kept out of our way, soldiers to whom we were superior. Now we were dealing with Russians.”

With shining eyes and dramatic gestures which the flickering fire throws in odd shadowy patterns

on the wall, Asil Khan describes the acts of heroism of individual comrades. He talks about the daring of officer Siddiq who crept up to a Russian tank posted on a bridge, set fire to it with an explosive charge and was then shot down from the bank by a burst of machine-gun fire. He talks of the furious widow Khubana from Batshe who, filled with holy anger, took the old Pakhtun sword of her dead husband out of the cupboard, ran at the tanks drawn up on the river bank swinging her sabre, and was cut down by shrapnel from a grenade. He talks of the belligerent mullah Mohammad Yakoub Feisan who, refusing to take cover from the bullet-spraying Mi-24 helicopters, opened fire on the descending paratroopers (and threatened his quaking wife with divorce if she moved out of their house from fear of the approaching Russians).

Heroism of this kind animates and inspires storyteller and audience alike. It enriches the store of romantic folklore of these ancient Pakhtun warriors of whom it is rightly said that "They are never at peace with themselves except when they are waging war." But somehow everyone around this fire senses that they are no longer really capable of waging this new war against the Soviet superpower. It is just too much for all their reserves of strength, their values, experience and innate capabilities.

Of course they still vow "to continue the fight with the help of Allah until the last drop of Afghani blood has been shed" and to overcome the Russians if necessary "with axes and knives." But from outside, where sleet is falling, a breath of frosty sobriety enters the hut in Adshab Shagai. "Belief in Allah is not enough to defeat this opponent", concedes Mohammad Taher, the former commander of a battalion in the Afghan army. And Gul Amir, one-time Air-Force major from Kabul, asks painfully: "What is all our courage against this ultra-modern technology of war?"

But immediately he flares up: "American publicity claims we are getting weapons from China, Pakistan, and the CIA. That's why the Russians are laying into us so brutally now. It's just a pack of lies. We are fighting with the guns of our fathers and grandfathers, with rifles and pistols made by our own smiths and with war equipment that we've plundered. Tell the West that we are proud men who have never begged. But now we are begging and we're asking for weapons, tanks and anti-aircraft missiles. We've reached the end of the line. Soon any help that comes will be too late, and Afghanistan will be dead. . . ."

THIS FRAGMENTARY RECONSTRUCTION of the fighting in the Kunar Valley—the first major breakthrough by the invading Soviet troops into one of the strongholds of the tribal rebellion—

reveals grave errors of leadership amongst the rebels. They don't only need armour-piercing weapons. What they really need is know-how, so that they can at least employ what they do have at their disposal in an effective way.

Asil Khan omitted to post alert lookouts down-valley who would have given him early warning of the Soviet tank offensive. Irrationally, he decided on a stationary defence of Shigal against the overwhelming Russian forces, apparently under orders from the exile headquarters of his party in Peshawar (the military committee is led by an Islamic theologian). Instead of deciding on guerrilla tactics and dividing his own forces into small offensive units—instead of decentralising, spreading out, attacking with commando raids launched from hideouts and thus offering the Russians no stationary target—they wanted Shigal to be held from fixed positions.

Then, instead of all the resistance forces getting together and putting themselves under one command, the internal war between *Hezbi-Islam* and *Jamiate-Islam*, the two leading rebel organisations in the Kunar Valley, continued to rage unabated. Since Asil Khan had directives from Peshawar, and since he personally mistrusted the other guerrilla group—"They just want to see the king reinstated, but we'll put a stop to that"—there was no contact and no discussion between the two rebel factions. "When I was desperately looking round for people to help construct a tank-trap, I saw a group of *Jamiate-Islam* supporters sitting behind a rock happily devouring a roast chicken. . . ."

ASIL KHAN is, however, largely himself to blame for this catastrophic split in the rebel forces. It was he who in the summer of 1979 stirred up trouble and caused bloodshed amongst the deserting Asmar brigade in order to win over soldiers and weapons to his *Hezbi-Islami* and away from the *Jamiate-Islami*. There were violent shoot-outs which served to convince the two other Afghani brigades from Shiga Serai and Barikote (both of which were ready to desert) that they would be better off continuing to serve the Communist régime in Kabul, rather than joining this hopelessly divided mob of rebels. A few days later when this affair is discussed in a village in the Kunar Valley, I hear somebody say: "We could have killed Asil Khan then because he destroyed the unity of the resistance for which we all pray."

The upper Kunar Valley was firmly in the hands of the rebels for a year-and-a-half. The Mujaheddin were able to reign here unchallenged with their own administration, a strictly Islamic legal system, their own prisons. The main supply routes ran through here, and along them the Afghani rebels in the provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, Parwan and

Badakhshan were supplied from Pakistan. Here, they were saying a short while ago, an "Islamic Republic" would be declared and a "provisional government" installed.

And yet the guerrillas were not able to move freely among their own people when things started to hot up in the Kunar Valley. "Just as we have to fear the Russians now, in that time we had to watch out for the other Mujaheddin groups, for Communist agents and informers, even for unreliable members of our own soldiers' families", laments one of the rebels from Asil Khan's group. And he emphasises: "The Russians were precisely informed about all of our positions and hiding-places in advance. They fired at and bombarded exactly the right locations and houses. They knew us all by name." Just how popular are the exile organisations inside Afghanistan?

Peshawar, March

ROUGH-HEWN CRUTCHES stand in a corner of the gloomy yard. An Afghani who has had his foot amputated is crouching on the ground washing a single sock. Another, a blood-soaked bandage on his arm, is boiling water for tea in the kitchen. On the flat roof of the rebel lodge, lean figures with aquiline profiles religiously perform their devotions. Then they roll themselves up in their frayed blankets in one of the dormitories, and rest, preparing themselves for the night march into occupied Afghanistan and the resistance stronghold near Jalalabad. Above the gate which opens from the yard on to a foul-smelling back alley there is a poster with the slogan: "The Mujaheddin fighting for Allah kill and are killed—both will be richly rewarded by Allah."

THE PAKISTANI caravan and garrison city of Peshawar, 60 kilometres from the Afghan border, lies at the exit of the legendary Khyber Pass. It is a sluice between the Himalayas, the Hindu Kush mountains, and the subcontinent through which so much world history has passed. World religions and world conquerors have streamed in, and out again, leaving traces of great victories and defeats. Today, in the name of Allah, the leaders of the Afghani exile and resistance organisations are attempting, from their headquarters in Peshawar, to influence the course of history in their favour.

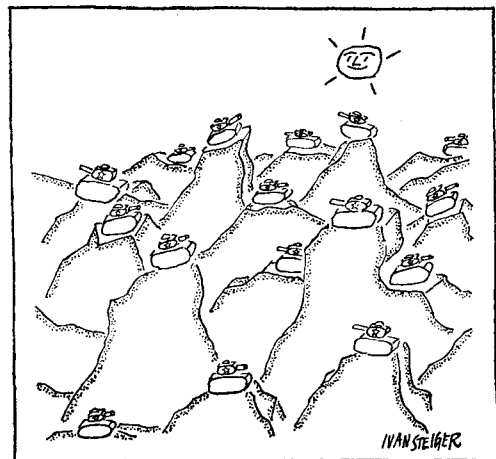
Success is not conspicuous. Even three months after the Soviet invasion, the exile groups are not really ready to join forces. They are still arguing about who has got the larger following inside Afghanistan, who has the greater number of

fighting units, who "controls" more Afghani provinces. They rant and rave about who can enlist most members and sympathisers from the 650,000 Afghani refugees in Pakistan, and try to lure them with party membership cards, blankets, tents, food and medical supplies.

They accuse each other of personal power-seeking, conciliatory policies, softness towards the Russians, even of secret treaties with the Communist régime in Kabul. The air is heavy with trivial, unnecessary suspicion. Of one émigré leader they say; "He leads an un-Islamic life of luxury—he keeps servants, drinks alcohol, is a womaniser." They whisper about another: "He is only fighting with his men in the Pandshier Valley and in Badakhshan because of the copious jewels to be found there..." Among the exiles in Peshawar there is no conversation without a few nasty side-swipes at their rivals, who are either denounced as "extreme right-wing fanatics", "Islamic reactionaries", or as "lackeys of the king" and "American puppets." None of the resistance groups likes the idea of foreign visitors taking a look round one group and then going off to gather information from the others.

Vanity and jealousy of this kind continually block the possibility of collective action. "Everyone claims the leadership, and nobody is capable of taking it on. Nobody has any real influence or effective authority inside Afghanistan", they observe critically from the Pakistan side. A former Afghani ambassador who has placed himself at the disposal of the resistance says bitterly: "These resistance-mongers from Peshawar are only thinking of themselves, of how they can increase their own market value, instead of joining forces against the Russians."

Even Safi Batin Shah is bitterly disappointed by the internecine feuds among the exiles: "It has a devastating effect on morale and the spirit of resistance in the country, especially in the cities.



One day soon the people will stop sticking their necks out and just give in, no matter who is governing in Kabul."

The chemist, who was educated in Heidelberg and was formerly a university lecturer in Kabul, joined the guerrillas a few months ago and led a rebel attack on Jalalabad in the middle of February.

"I drummed up a group of 3,000 men from my own tribal people and from the villages where I was known. 500 of them possessed old rifles and shotguns, the rest were armed with wooden clubs and axes. We got cartridges from Afghani soldiers we had fraternised with, or on the black market for 100 Afghani [about £1] each. In one night we attacked the village of Rodat, drove out the local administration, killed 12 policemen and Communist officials. Then we wanted to march on Jalalabad. . . . But none of the other guerrilla groups would go with us. We came under fire from 50 Afghani and Soviet tanks, six helicopters and a MiG-23 squadron, suffered heavy losses and were forced to scatter. I fled across the border to Peshawar." His impression after three weeks of exile: "Everybody here is thinking only of their own faction. They forget that Afghanistan must be liberated by a united front before we can afford these internal party struggles. I'd rather just go back to Europe and finish my doctorate. . . ."

THE AFGHANI TRIBAL WARRIORS live and fight just as they did 60 years ago when Lord Ronaldshay described them: "The salient characteristics of these tribes are self-interest, vanity and pride, slyness, desire for revenge, general indiscipline. Their relationships with one another are characterised by a thinly disguised antipathy which can break out into open enmity and tribal aggression at any time and which can only be sublimated into religious fanaticism. . . ."

Thus, they are not only fighting the Russians, they are also fighting themselves. These tendencies are also apparent in the exile labyrinth of Peshawar where the separate resistance organisations are competing for Afghani rebel recruits, appealing to special regional interests and social and tribal loyalties. They are also competing for the support of guerrilla groups who have already taken up the struggle against the Russians and Communists independently, under the leadership of local mullahs and maliks, and who resist outside control as far as possible.

There are no radio links to and from Peshawar, only messengers who bring news about the fighting after several days' march on foot and take back "combat orders" from the central leadership of their respective parties. Orders must often be argued back and forth between the tribal and village elders in a tiresome tug-of-war. "These

messengers often have aims and plans of their own concerning the fighting. They demand payment in the form of money, weapons and supplies, listening to the offers of several exile groups before they decide which one to work for." This is how the American consul in Peshawar sees the complicated business of communication.

For Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the crack forces of the militant, fundamentalist *Hezbi-Islami*, the unification of the exile groups is not of high priority: "We are not against unity, but we can manage this struggle on our own. The Russians marched into Afghanistan because the Communist régime was floundering helplessly. We brought that about without any united front of resistance groups." This kind of arrogance and separatist self-confidence is promoted by the semi-official and private "donations" which have been passed to the various organisations by Moslem supporters. In the twilight wings of Peshawar the holy Afghan war against the Russians and the Communists is being fuelled with a lot of hard cash.

The radical *Hezbi-Islami* party is supported by Saudi money; recently it has also significantly strengthened its contacts with Iran and Khomeini. On the bank statement which the treasurer of the "National Liberation Front" checked quite publicly at a bank counter in Peshawar not long ago, the latest Saudi Arabian gift of around 76,000 dollars was recorded. The leader of this front, Professor Sabgatullah Mujaddedi, an inscrutable man in a black scholar's coat, is doubtless making use of his many influential contacts—he used to teach theology in Saudi Arabia, and from 1974–78 he was head of the Islamic Centre in Copenhagen which was financed by Colonel Gaddafi, the Libyan head of state.

The same is true of the pro-Western liberal Sharia lawyer, Ahmed Ghilani, with his "National Front of the Islamic Revolution." He and his party cannot help but profit from his Saudi passport and from his daughter's flirtation with Crown Prince Fahd. His connections with Iraq can certainly do him no harm either—an ancestor of Ghilani's was one of the most influential Sufis in Iraq, and his cousin is the Iraqi ambassador in Islamabad. But ultimately, the smaller exile groups are being kept in business by Pakistani Islam organisations.

After many false starts, after a great deal of manoeuvring around the idea of unification, and after all the intrigues and alliances on which the exiled Afghani politicians have wasted their time in the last year, the "Islamic Alliance for the Liberation of Afghanistan" finally came into being at the end of January. The six most important groups were united under pressure from the Russian invasion and from the conference of Islamic Foreign ministers which was convened in Islamabad and offered large financial and political incentives.

But when they got down to brass tacks and tried

to formalise the loose alliance agreement by forming a Revolutionary Council and electing a president and vice-president, the desire for unity quickly dissipated. Once again there was disagreement, this time over the composition of the Revolutionary Council. The question of exile representation led to a division into three camps.

1. Ahmed Ghilani and Sabgatullah Mujaddedi, the aristocrats of the resistance movement, rooted in Afghani tradition and descended from the holy prophets and caliphs, demanded equal representation for all parties and wished to see "the representation of the Afghani people", i.e. the inclusion of as many tribal leaders as possible from central Afghanistan.

2. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar insisted on representation which corresponded to the military strength of the individual parties (highly disputed and impossible to calculate exactly) and which would include only those tribal leaders who were party members, with the justification that "Our movement is Islamic, our struggle is not a tribal struggle. The leaders of the tribes were the stooges of the old régime. Today, only the ordinary fighting people matter."

3. The leaders of the three small Mujaheddin organisations with a narrowly regional area of operations energetically demanded complete equality for all the exile groups in the Revolutionary Council, and they also opposed the acceptance of tribal princes, whose presence would bring their tiny groups no military advantage or increase of votes whatsoever.

THE END RESULT IS a fragile and superficial alliance: there are 35 members, and Hekmatyar's party refuses to take part. The other five parties have seven seats each and there are to be no independent tribal representatives. The wrangling over ideological and religious differences continues. Everybody is for Islam and against Communism. But beyond this small common denominator, ideas and aims for the political future of Afghanistan diverge. This is especially true of the most influential and charismatic personalities amongst the exiles in Peshawar, Ahmed Ghilani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. They stand for two different Islamic philosophies and two Afghani worlds.

Ahmed Ghilani, with his pointed beard, points proudly to his descent from the prophet Mohammad. His image is that of a 48-year-old man-of-the-world, in a chic leather jacket, Italian shoes, and tight, fashionable, two-tone beige trousers: "We don't want an Islamic dictatorship. We are aiming for an Islamic state which is free, democratic and modern. There need be no contradiction between Islam and the West in the 20th century. . . ."

He alludes to "good personal relations" with

King Zahir, who is living in exile in Rome; he wishes only to ban "atheists and Communists"—not social democrats—from the political arena in Afghanistan, and otherwise thinks the people should be allowed free elections: "The Afghans must decide their own form of government even if this means a return to King Zahir Shah." This royal comeback will only be allowed "in the context of a republican system. It will not be a hereditary monarchy, only a Caliphate for the King's lifetime", according to Ghilani.

Thirty-three-year-old Gulbuddin Hekmatyar doesn't have a family tree like Ghilani's connecting him to the Prophet Mohammad or, like Mujaddedi's, to the Caliph Omar. He is the son of poor provincial Afghans. He never finished his engineering studies at the university of Kabul: during the King's reign, he was thrown into jail as an agitator for the *Hezbi-Islami* party (which he helped to found as early as 1968). Even after the fall of the monarchy in 1973, he was outlawed as an enemy of the state and persecuted by Mohammad Daoud, the President of the Republic. Hekmatyar speaks softly. He comes across as a shy, rather clumsy man. His caracul fur hat and full black beard frame a youthful face and intense, melancholic eyes. Ascetically hard, intolerant and obsessed, this modestly-dressed man dreams of a Holy Islamic State in Afghanistan.

In the Kunar Valley, late March

THE HUNDREDS come to thousands, and it must be some four kilometres long, this marching line of refugees climbing the muddy, snow-slippery trail through the valley up to the Gakkai Pass. Many are barefoot, others have wrapped their feet in rags. Children carry young ones on their back, and a few manage a chicken or two under their arms. One can see every now and then lumbering young women, high in pregnancy, carrying pots and pans and bedding. Their husbands stumble alongside, with as much furniture and kitchenware as they can hold, perhaps leading a calf on a string. Most of them are quiet, exhausted, hoping only for the last station in some miserable camp of tents over the Pakistan border. I note one old couple, carrying nothing, practically holding each other up, and they say, "Sixteen members of our family perished in the fighting. We couldn't even manage to bury them, for the Russians were in our village. We had to hide the corpses in a cave. . . ."

They come from all corners of the Kunar Valley, but mostly from the Shigal area in which some 22 villages were evidently destroyed in a number of tank and air offensives. They have walked for three days and nights, and agitatedly report the cruelties to women and children: especially from the "fire-

breathing bombs" which destroyed their houses. One says: "I saw how the Russians took three Mujaheddin prisoners. They disarmed them and then sprayed them with something which set them alight as if they were torches. . . ."

I take the various bits of testimony with some care and sceptical caution. I have been under way for days and nights, and have stopped in villages which were reported to have been "totally destroyed." (The damage, more or less, was caused by one or two salvoes from air-to-ground rockets, which blasted a few houses. . . .) Many of the refugee groups with which I marched for a time were supposed to have come from areas of "bitter fighting"; but I rarely saw anybody who had been wounded. Later on, in the Pakistan hospital at Khar, on the other side of the Gakkai Pass, I found only a handful of casualties from the Kunar Valley battles.¹

¹ On my transistor radio I heard horrifying reports in Western broadcasts of massive Soviet napalm and poison-gas attacks. I found no evidence of this among the refugees I saw (and I know what napalm burns look like from my time in Viet Nam). I interviewed 52 Afghans from all parts of the Kunar Valley, and although they had only the worst of things to report about the Russians, none of them talked of poison gas.

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AS FAR AS one could estimate, after three months of the invasion about eight-to-ten thousand inhabitants of the Valley (pop.: 150,000) are now refugees to Pakistan. Many of the settled areas appear intact, but altogether empty, for everybody has taken to the hills and caves to "wait." Every evening a small group is sent down to take a look around, and check on the cattle as best they can. In other areas only the women and children were sent away, the menfolk remained. Some peasant stratagems, as I discovered, were ingenious: in Tercho Kalai my host decided to send one of his wives off to the mountains with most of their belongings, and the other wife stayed behind to cook.

I talked to one farmer—Gul Ahmed Khan, aged 45, father of eight children—who held out even when the helicopters came in daily attacks. "I do not wish to be buried on foreign soil. We will not run away. We still have sacks of corn to make bread and animals for meat. Enough for us till the next harvest. . . ." He was the man in command of the Mujaheddin in the area between Batcha and Deridam. There were 140 of them, at least to begin with; some 40 fell in the first battles, another 25 wandered off to Pakistan. Gul Ahmed Khan, needless to say, was furious about the frightened ones, and even angrier, if possible, about those so-called guerrilla fighters who battled long enough to build up a little collection of Russian weapons (Kalashnikovs, grenades, bazookas) and then proceeded to sell them on the black market across the frontier.

I met a refugee family from the Shigal Valley at Gul Ahmed Khan's and was entertained by a vivacious four-year-old who imitated, with buzzing voice and flailing arms, a Russian helicopter which she had recently seen in action over her head. Only a little later we saw the real thing—two Soviet helicopters in the Kunar Valley, buzzing and whirling above our heads. The little girl no longer thought it entertaining. She began to weep bitterly, and her father picked her up, consoled and comforted her, but went on telling me of the military activities back in Hilazu.

"We had to deal with Russian parachutists. They were good soldiers so long as they sat in their fixed positions with all their equipment and ammunition. But they are poor marksmen. And weak soldiers once they have to go out into the open fields and move around on foot. They carry too much in the way of weapons and bullets, and that makes them so slow we thought they could hardly move. They have no idea of how to find natural cover, and they just can't run fast enough. That's how we get them."

Evidently he and two others had cornered a number of Russian parachutists who had just been set down by a helicopter to make their way down to a road below our hill. "We jumped at one. He had

to drop his weapon and equipment to wrestle with us. I tried to stab him but my knife made no headway against his hard vest full of ammunition, and so we had to cut his throat. My friends took care of several others. Then with an axe their heads were chopped off. The Mujaheddin don't take prisoners. . . ." In conclusion he offered me a little keepsake—a Red Star with Hammer & Sickle—which he had taken from a Soviet cap: "To remind you of our fight for freedom! . . ."

THEY WANT to be free, these Pakhtun warriors. Many evenings we spent talking about the meaning of freedom. For them it was freedom from all laws and compulsions which they themselves in their tribal consensus and customs do not voluntarily accept and embrace. That was why the conflict grew and deepened during the Taraki/Amin régime which introduced "agrarian" and "educational reforms."

"They wanted us to be their soldiers, to take our children to their schools, to give away pieces of land to them from our farmholdings. . . . But we will not share our families and our lands with anybody! That is the way of godlessness. There was no other way but to declare a holy war."

This was the account given to me by the *malik* of Tercho Kalai who with obvious nostalgia recalled the days of King Zahir Shah: "A good man. He thought of us as his children. He left us in peace."

IT IS THIS wild and uncompromising drive for liberty and individuality which makes them so personally strong and yet so weak in the collective. They do not fit easily into an organised effort, certainly not into a campaign that crosses the lines of village, valley, and tribe. Nobody could be more vehement against the godless invaders, but not even God could get them to change their ways in order to re-organise for effective struggle. As I marched with the refugees through the valleys and fields I

learned to fear not only Russian planes and artillery but also the lurking danger from the next village where dark medieval suspicions and threats awaited the outsider, the stranger.

My companion and translator, Mohammad Taher, tries to estimate the dual threats—for one I need anthropology, for the other a bit more mathematics. The artillery rounds seem to be overarching us, exploding in the depths of the valley. Mohammad gives up: on me, on the threatening villagers, on the miscalculating Russians. He seeks refuge in the Koran, and his morning prayers (after broken sleep, dreaming of his abandoned family in Kabul) seem especially intense. But intense too is the way he listens to the cassette which he plays again and again on our little recorder: "*The People are ready/Ready in the name of the Prophet/Angels will bless the warriors with holy water/The People are ready. . . .*" It is the song of the Mujaheddin, and seems to give him new courage.

WE ARE holed up on the side of a hill, in carefully chosen cover. Below is the Kunar Valley, the river, the road, the column of Soviet tanks. Over to the left is the provincial capital, Chiga Sarai, partly shielded by the Kaodara Kamar mountain, and now a Red Army fortress, a powerful armoured stronghold. Towards the rear the artillery fire is incessant, and somewhere in these heavenly blue skies are the nervewracking rotor-flailing gun-ships. No doubt about it, the Red Army is in control of the Valley. Mohammad Taher says: "We are compelled to fight on, even without hope. A people that wants to live in history has no alternative. This holds a people together. If we abandoned all and did nothing, we would have to live on in shame. . . ."

I leave the last words to yet another rebel spokesman, who dictated his message to me slowly so that I could copy down every word in my notebook: "Ours is not a battle against a Super-power, it is a holy war, a war against godlessness. Allah is the only Super-power, and he is on our side."

NORTH & SOUTH

The Man on the Ledge

Uses of Compassion in Public Affairs—By HERB GREER

"How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, an emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. . . ."

ADAM SMITH

Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)

ONCE UPON A TIME the virtue of compassion was largely coupled with religious feeling and thought. In our age it has emerged as a major secular institution—not to say enterprise, as one might imagine from the pemmican-like mix of compassionate appeals and protests which have clogged the public's attention over the past decade-and-a-half. But for all the deliberate use and over-use of compassion as a stimulant to public opinion, this moral amphetamine has lost little if any of its power to arouse a habitually indifferent populace.

There are those who fancy that only the vulgar are consistently swayed by the moods of a tender heart, and that such irrationality is of no real concern to "serious" people. Today this very vulgarity must command serious attention, if only because our democracies are supposed to be governments of the vulgar, by the vulgar, and for the vulgar—and lest anyone take that as a gibe, it should be remembered that the word, properly speaking, refers to the common people. Even allowing that it does have a certain pejorative ring, one may also recall that in a modern democracy

"The prejudices and suspicions of the unlearned . . . become the mental furniture of their educated betters. . . ." ¹

This is, so to speak, redoubled when applied to an emotional cast which is so widely regarded as necessary to move public opinion and affect political choice.

The extraordinary power of compassion is maximised in public life by the apparently cast-iron conviction of many politicians, journalists, and members of the public that "fairness" and "morality" have no other real criterion than the dictates of a compassionate urge. In the ethical swamp of our time compassion is treated as if it were a firm tussock of certainty, as it were quite unambiguous. This aching biological sympathy—the stabbing echo of a fellow-creature's pain—is supposed to be among the most human and the most humane of our impulses. Yet animals and birds display evident symptoms of it, and there is some (rather equivocal) evidence that even plants undergo something of the sort. The roots of compassion seem to extend well beyond the bounds of human nature, deep into the obscure biological heritage which we share with all living things. This may be why the *homo sapient* functions of logic and common sense are so often and so easily subverted by compassion. Paradoxically, this blind mortal impulse is also vulnerable to abstract appeals, which makes it—hardened into a categorical imperative—such a popular tool in public life: useful to politicians sincere and disingenuous, to pressure groups of every description, even an efficient weapon for grimmer figures like the terrorists who infest our Western democracies.

These are hard words, of course. A terrorist's weapon? Arguable, perhaps; we shall see. A tool for politicians and pressure groups? Well, everyone knows that, and so what? If these people arouse a fundamentally decent impulse and incite us to follow it, what harm can come of that? Can genuine, sincere compassion, however stimulated, lead to anything but some act of reverence for life, some noble expression of the human instinct to help one's fellows survive?

SURVIVAL is the business of our most characteristic compassionate pressure group: the Aid Agency. There are many of these, busily courting the conscience—and the purse—of the

¹ Donald C. Watt in ENCOUNTER, June 1978, p. 84.

public, while standing ready to assist whenever a natural or political disaster strikes in some part of the world. The methods used by some agencies in their appeals for funds are occasionally doubtful—current heart-rending photographs of victims may turn out to be those of last year's starving refugees—but it would be mean-spirited to cavil. Surely it is the response that counts, the help which is offered to current sufferers?

By one of those curious strokes of journalistic fashion it was suddenly and widely reported not long ago that decent aid-agency help is not always what the public imagine it must be. A wry article in the Indian magazine *Sunday* (23 April 1978) described what happened after the cyclones in Andhra Pradesh. The horrifying statistics of the disaster (15,000 dead, 200,000 cattle drowned, a million homeless) brought a rush of some 70 voluntary aid agencies into the region. Suspiciously avoiding local channels of distribution, the agencies attempted to hand every item of aid "direct to a victim". Eventually they found themselves at the end of a muddy road which petered out into ravaged wilderness. They then

"dumped their goods at the nearest village. After a week of this, the villagers, at first in danger of disappearing under piles of clothing, had become highly discriminating. If the quality of the aid did not measure up to their new standards, they sent the aid team packing. . . A black joke was going the rounds of aid officials: instead of their adopting a village, soon there would be a village rich enough to adopt an agency."

The report, however, is not just a tragi-comic indictment of aid which leaves some victims rich and others sunk in a slough of misery. It points out that local people were kept standing about for hours queueing for handouts when they could have been busy with the work of rebuilding or cultivating the fields. This created a "refugee-camp" mentality and impaired the will to make use of resources which were locally available. In the end recovery was actually delayed by the very people who had been sent there to help—and an official had to be sent down from Hyderabad to "sort out the agencies."

A *Sunday Times* report (by Philip Knightley, 25 June 1978) gave details of what can happen when the most generous aid is passed out according to the priorities of agencies rather than in response to local needs. Aid in the Ethiopian famine of 1975 caused large numbers of deaths. In Guatemala after the earthquake of 1976 disaster "relief" proved largely irrelevant when it did arrive—after the catastrophe's impact had been absorbed locally. Even then agencies *continued* to pour unnecessary

food into the country until the local economy was seriously damaged. According to Tony Jackson, a former US Aid official who was in Guatemala at the time:

"Despite appeals from those of us who saw the damage that this food aid was causing, the American agencies refused to cut back to pre-earthquake levels. They had so many programmes going that offered free food as an inducement—'Food for Work', 'Mother and Child Health'—that they continued for nearly two years to bring in food. Finally the US Government had to order them to cut back to pre-earthquake levels as from mid-June 1978. But the damage had already been done."²

Speaking more generally, one Indian editor, Vinod Mehta, has complained that Western Aid Philosophy is based on two main tenets: (1) The West has a monopoly on compassion; and (2) These poor people can't cope without us.

IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT the ambiguities of aid can become very messy indeed. During the Cambodian horrors of 1979 it became difficult and sometimes impossible to distinguish between refugees and guerrillas or defeated soldiers on the run with their families. Obviously a "rescued" soldier is able to continue fighting—and killing.

On 18 May this year I watched, with chilly amusement, a BBC documentary, *The Politics of Compassion*. In almost two hours of special Sunday Pleading, this show offered little more than a smooth commercial for an organisation called "Christian Aid." Good will and kindness were treated with cool disdain, as being "insufficient" in the Third World. Christian-Aiders appeared to prefer the message of street-theatre melodramas in Madras which called for violent and bloody revolution. The programme urged that Christian Aid grants should support such "fundamental" activities, and argued further that the financing of militant street-demonstrators and revolutionary politics was a perfectly legitimate "project" for a tax-exempt charitable organisation.

The sophistries and terrible over-simplifications did not appear to register on London's TV critics (except for one devastating critique by Andrew Alexander, "Is This Where You Want Your Charity To Go?", *Daily Mail*, 19 May). As the ironies of the long evening would have it, another BBC-TV programme only a half-hour later, *Charity Stays at Home*, exposed the shabby dialectics of pseudo-Christian compassion which holds sympathy at home to be enslaving, sympathy abroad to be liberating. The highlight was a painful discussion between bland pro-Aid officials and some textile workers from Preston whose jobs were

² This quote was given separately to the author by Philip Knightley of the *Sunday Times*.

fast disappearing. The workers were demanding some aid for their own industry. The very compassionate pro-Aid spokesmen were saying in effect that the good people of Preston must take their troubles passively like good Christians while they watched large amounts of money going abroad, to create jobs in similar industries in the Third World. The Preston workers found this somewhat illogical and would not accept the argument. If they had seen the first programme, in which "compassion" was giving support to violent "raised consciousness" abroad (while encouraging a stoic passivity in their own case), they might have given more than words to the soapy bureaucrats across the table.

The Third World is not the only object of confused attempts to act out compassionate good intentions. A few examples out of many closer to home: We have (1) the American social workers' game of "Indigence" in which help is often organised in order to *keep* the recipient on the dole;³ (2) the disastrous effect on law enforcement when we conform to the illusion of "Society" as a compassionate (or guilty) person; (3) the anomalies and financial tangles of the Welfare State, where compassion as political dogma and, say, the distribution of revenue are often spectacularly out of phase (bureaucrats thrive, the poor decay).

Possibly the oldest and most primitive instrument for harnessing compassion to political ends is the atrocity story. Its purpose is always the same: to evoke compassion in order to persuade one's allies and any "neutral" observers that the other side is less than human, therefore beyond compassion, absolutely fair game, and liable besides to severe moral condemnation. This technique was used with notable effect by the Inquisition against witches, heretics, and other dissenters in the late Middle Ages. Though debased today by saturation media coverage, it is still widely employed as a matter of political routine. In the small wars that scar the globe, enemy bombing raids *always* destroy a hospital or a school, and casualties are seldom if ever military personnel, but "women and children" and men too old to incur the guilt of being combatants. So, at least, the official reports would have us believe.

³ Eric Berne, *Games People Play* (1964), p. 147.

⁴ The height—or depth—of chic in such rites was attained by a big, glossy (and highly praised) entertainment for actors and symphony orchestra, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* by Tom Stoppard and André Previn. I do not suggest that these gentlemen were insincere.

⁵ On the BBC Radio show *Any Questions*, 20 May 1978. For other examples see the letter columns of *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The New Statesman*, etc., etc.

⁶ *Newsweek*, 1 May 1978, p. 13.

⁷ Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (1977).

IN THE WEST we are familiar *ad nauseam* with the perennial and ghastly tales of persecution, torture, and/or enslavement under one or another authoritarian régime. Unfortunately for all but a very few of the victims in these reports, this species of compassionate exercise has become a ritualised affair, less often a cause for effective political action than a slice of *grand guignol* or light entertainment⁴ which will duly amuse, outrage, or *épater* our acolytes of Right or Left—depending on where the atrocity was committed. Sometimes the general public responds too, sometimes not; this is largely determined by the space or time which media editors will allot to any given victim, which in turn is subject to the arbitrary swings and roundabouts of journalistic fashion. The energy of such a response is often absorbed in a kind of formal shouting match, entailing a great amount of tedious *tu quoque* gabble. This is a favourite tactic of leftists like the British trade union leader Clive Jenkins, who (for example) countered a reference to the Yuri Orlov scandal with a bit of knee-jerk cant about abuses of rights in America,⁵ implying that both sides cancel out, so we must not choose.

As a punctilious response to barbarity, compassion is totally wayward and always very selective. This is nowhere more obvious than in the proclivities of publicly warm-hearted individuals who justify (or, what amounts to the same thing, refuse to condemn) the terrorists who practise random murder and destruction among civilians. We have Lord Brockway asserting that two IRA criminals convicted of planting a bomb in a London street are "of good moral character." In a particularly appalling example, the US columnist Jack Anderson portrayed IRA terrorists in H Block of the Maze prison as wretched victims of the British—curiously failing to mention that the awful conditions of H Block were deliberately created by the terrorists themselves in order to secure just such a public-relations coup. In Western Europe we have had the "radical chic" Germans and Italians who gave shelter and help to Baader-Meinhof and Red Brigade terrorists; a young metalworker in Rome shrugged off the murder of Aldo Moro—after all, the politician was an "enemy of the working man."⁶

One must admit that these people do show a degree of consistency:

"Terrorism was a moral force, inducing an uneasy conscience among those it threatened and intimidating the politicians who did not wish to appear disloyal to the terrorists' concept of the historical mission of the . . . people."⁷

It goes without saying that the mission of all decent persons must be the elimination of "inhumanity . . . injustice . . . oppression", and the other iniquities catalogued in terrorist propaganda. As for "evidence" to make the rhetoric plausible, social

and political evils have become the media's consumer-products, offered to titillate the viewer's or the reader's compassionate conscience. The consumer is invited to gape with the Virgil-like cameraman or reporter-guide over the bar of a supermarket hell and sample the torments of the damned *as a spectacle*—and then to feel properly guilty as a member of the “system” which is supposed to inflict these sufferings with much conspiratorial malice aforethought. This approach helps to create a cast of mind which tolerates the most bizarre efforts to indulge terrorist fantasies. During the Patty Hearst kidnapping, when the “Symbionese Liberation Army” (whose military and political claims were generously advertised by the media) demanded that the Hearst family distribute two million dollars worth of food “to the poor”, a serious effort was made to comply. It ended with a cruel farce in which cases of goods were hurled wildly out of trucks into the midst of a rioting mob.

WITHOUT THE MEANS of a William Randolph Hearst, the ordinary consumer suffers a more comfortable guilt, informed by the knowledge that nothing can be done about it—at least not while he is taken up with cries of indignation at his TV-screen or newspaper-headlines. This is not to say that his compassion is hypocritical. Genuine humanitarians, exasperated by the anomalies and atrocities of a messy, overcrowded and abominably savage world, can easily fantasise a tie to those who are “at least doing something” about inhumanity, injustice, oppression. It is like a list of brand-names in a sale, with the consumer righteously persuaded to pay the price: in this case somebody else's death.

The illusion seems plausible, and soothing. “Society” can be imagined *in toto* as a deliberately confected system, therefore it can be treated as such, replaced like a faulty machine or a failing management team. This mirage is a convenient burning-lens for all one's smouldering anger at wretched officials who appear helpless or indifferent in the face of some scandal for which media and terrorists alike demand instant solutions. It is a rare angry man who will consider that “Society” was not cobbled together by some conspiratorial think-tank “up there” but grew spontaneously, usually changing as a result of myriads of individual decisions, mostly unrelated except in their common

source of human needs, brought together and patterned by our knack of imitating successful and (most important) comforting actions.

IT IS THE QUALITY of comfort rather than success which seems to be the crux of this matter. The current crop of terrorists have been monotonously unsuccessful in achieving their intended “changes”, and still seem to enjoy both active and passive support—not only from those couched at a safe distance from their crimes. Hostages of more than one kidnapping, knowing their captors would not hesitate to slaughter them, have been persuaded to embrace the “cause” of their potential murderers, and come out of the experience mumbling the slogans of the terrorists, or defending them on compassionate grounds. The small number of these people in absolute terms is hugely magnified by the generally sympathetic treatment which they are given in the media, especially on television.⁸ This sympathy extends to the ideal motives, and occasionally to the terrorists themselves, even after they have committed sickening acts of barbarism. This usually takes the form of uncritical acceptance of catchwords (freedom; self-determination; a “homeland”—the expression *Lebensraum* being out of fashion) as goals, and a reluctance to examine the real motive, which is to gain public attention. This reluctance may stem from the media's complicity in supplying just that attention.

As in the case of Jack Anderson, journalists can be awful suckers for the 19th-century rodomontade which is the common currency of terrorists. But the journalists are not alone. Moralistic-compassionate rhetoric is also widely used by tyrannical left-wing governments and so-called “liberation” forces; and it can turn the heads of the most honourable men.

AMONG THE MOST professionally honourable of compassionate organisations is Amnesty International, whose brief is to ferret out “violations of Human Rights”, expose them to the world and so shame the perpetrators. In practice Amnesty retails carefully selected “atrocities stories” calculated to suggest in the classic manner that the side which it does not approve of is less than human, beyond compassion, and deserves the most severe moral condemnation. It has been noted that Amnesty accepts testimony from refugees who have suffered under right-wing régimes, but considered those who fled from (for example) the massacres in Cambodia to be curiously suspect, and complained of “a lack of information” in this sphere. In the case of Ulster they are prepared to publicise *anonymous* accusations of ill-treatment, and do not suppose that specific violations of Human Rights by the

⁸ A rare exception was the relatively hostile interview of an American hostage in Teheran after the “revolutionary” government of Iran elevated terrorism to the status of national policy. But TV reporters there still gave a remarkably obsequious performance—in particular Mike Wallace, in scenes with the Ayatollah Khomeini.

IRA come within the scope of their investigations. Indeed Dick Oosting, Secretary General of Amnesty International, delicately avoided the use of the word "prisoner" when referring to captives of the Ulster terrorists. He preferred to call them "persons in their temporary custody."⁹

Like Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches is choosy about where it finds "Human Rights." The WCC sub-body, the "Commissioners' Programme to Combat Racism", recommended that £45,000 be donated to an African group which had just committed a particularly damnable (and racist) mass murder of missionaries near Umtali in Rhodesia, complete with rape, mutilation, slaughter of children, and so on. The donation was approved; there were some protests, but a spokesman for the "Commissioners' Programme" was not apologetic. Sandy Kirby (speaking on the BBC's *World At One*) coldly remarked that "people get killed in wars", and suggested that such massacres would in any event be the norm for White resistance movements. (The last large-scale instance of "White resistance movements" was seen in Western Europe during World War II, and one would have great difficulty in finding any such episode in their annals. Of course "racist massacres" were conducted in that war—by the Nazis.)¹⁰

IN CASES LIKE the Southern Africa incidents in which (White) "people get killed in wars", humane values can, with a bit of deft handling, be turned inside out. Killings of Blacks from the days of Sharpeville to the Soweto incidents of more recent times are drilled into the memory by repeated rehearsals in print and the visual media. Black and White spectators are adjured never to forget these atrocities. But Joshua Nkomo, arriving in Rhodesia this year to take part in the electoral campaign,

brushed aside the embarrassing occasion when his troops shot down a civilian aircraft and then slaughtered the (White) survivors of the crash. "War is war", he said grandly, and all that must be forgotten now.

Another public-relations tactic is employed frequently and rather successfully, not only in the racist wars of "Liberation" in Southern Africa, but in the irredentist skirmishes in the Middle East. Guerrillas consistently station combat personnel among civilians, usually in refugee camps and villages. Raids against these forces, expected or provoked, always kill some of the civilians, who are then portrayed as victims of criminal negligence *by the attackers* (cf. reportage and comment on the Israeli incursions into Southern Lebanon) or as the prey of sadistic racists (reports of raids on African guerrilla bases).¹¹ Quite absent from the shocked and compassionate reports in our news media is any murmur of protest or even comment on those who deliberately dispersed military targets among civilians in the first place.

RACISM as an issue has become very much *à la mode* in the domestic politics of Britain and America, usually tied to some campaign for "Social Justice." The palpable reality of the latter is taken for granted rather than explained. Professor F. A. Hayek is bemused by this ideological curiosity and complains that it is devoid of meaning;¹² but that is not quite true. Where "Justice" refers to the enforcement of law tempered with compassion, "Social Justice" demands that all administrative actions of government (including legislation, law enforcement, and especially the distribution of revenue) be *determined* by selective compassion.

A witch's brew of "Racism" and "Social Justice" has given rise to several tragi-comedies in the perverse theatrical mode of public affairs.¹³ One such drama, still running strong, is the Great Historical Injustice. This is an atrocity story *par excellence*, put together out of the quondam existence and present consequences of slavery in the Anglo-Saxon world. It opens with the repulsive trade which was plied between Africa and the New World, in which Blacks were herded into ships, died in large numbers en route, and on arrival were sold like cattle to owners who used them as labouring livestock. In the second act we are reminded that the abolition of slavery after the American Civil War did not improve the situation of Blacks very much, and in many cases worsened it. Like the slavery before it, this development is portrayed as a profoundly malicious conspiracy of the White Race *sui generis*, a plot which still thickens under the hypocritically liberal surface of our society. The purpose of the Great Conspiracy has been clearly stated by the Black novelist James Baldwin:

⁹ In a letter to *The Times* dated 21 June 1978.

¹⁰ It is worth noting by the way that the stigma of racism is attached by our media almost exclusively to Whites who discriminate against and/or kill Blacks and almost never the other way round. E.g. the massacres at Kolwezi and Umtali. The compassionate and rather condescending habit of excusing "lesser breeds" dies hard in the liberal West.

¹¹ This gambit, also used by the North Vietnamese with brilliant success, may have been suggested by public revulsion at the French attack on Sakiet Sidi Youssef during the Algerian War. While working as a TV reporter in Tunisia at the time, I was treated to a remarkably smooth, self-satisfied and very professional sales pitch over the atrocity at Sakiet—so professional that the obvious elements of smugness and exploitation got in the way of one's natural sympathy for the victims.

¹² *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* (1977), vol. II.

¹³ For an explanation of this term see my article "The Twopenny Candle", in *ENCOUNTER*, June 1978.

"The truth can no longer be ignored—White America appears to be seriously considering the possibilities of mass extermination."

Baldwin's historical perspective is not limited to the present generation of white vipers:

"What this generation [of Blacks] . . . is saying is that they realize that you, the white people, white Americans, have always attempted to murder them."¹⁴

There are various odd "racial" facts which have been excised from the White Conspiracy myth—those who condemned slavery and agitated for its abolition before the Civil War were almost all White; the majority of those who fought and died on the anti-slavery side were White; a number who fought and died on the pro-slavery side were Black; those who continued the campaign for social and political advancement of Blacks after the Civil War were almost all White; and it had been a white man who formulated the basis for their campaign in a document entitled *The Rights of Man* (I pass over the *Declaration of Independence* in case Thomas Jefferson is disqualified as a dissembling slave-owner). The large-scale involvement of Blacks in Civil Rights agitation has arisen only during the past two decades, when Blacks emerged as a major political pressure group in the USA.

True believers in The Great Historical Injustice portray slavery and racism as exclusive White evils. They choose to overlook the "racism" which has existed on the Indian sub-continent for more than a thousand years among men of colour; or that which flourished among Arabs for centuries and is enshrined in their literature; or that slavery flourished among men of various colours long before the relatively brief Anglo-Saxon experience with the institution. It is inconvenient, perhaps, to recall that the slave trade was enthusiastically serviced by Blacks at the African end, selling other Blacks out of domestic servitude and into foreign slavery where, if they survived the voyage, their conditions were likely to improve.¹⁵

¹⁴ Both quotes from a report to ENCOUNTER by Arnold Beichman, June 1978.

¹⁵ Recent historical research has suggested that the general fate of slaves in America was not quite so physically horrible as was claimed by the feverish propaganda of the Abolitionists and their successors. Our popular image of American slavery with constant sadistic beatings, invariably murderous and lecherous (male and female) owners, quasi-psychopathic overseers, etc., derives less from generally valid historical fact than from sentimentalised treatment of hard cases by melodramatists in the style of Harriet Beecher Stowe.

¹⁶ *Pensées*, No. 825.

¹⁷ See Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic and Mau-mauing the Flak-Catchers* (1970) for brilliant sketches of how adroitly manipulated compassion turned intelligent and well-meaning people into confused idiots. More recently we have had the extraordinary performance of Mr Ramsey Clark in Teheran.

The operative and racist myth of The Great Historical Injustice has been embraced, not only by "liberal intellectuals" on both sides of the Atlantic, but by a fair number of others who ought to know better. Pascal once remarked:

"... the people commonly reason thus: 'A thing is possible, therefore it is.' Because a thing cannot generally be denied, some particular aspects of it being true, the people, being unable to distinguish which of these particular aspects are the true ones, believe in them all."¹⁶

There is no lack of information to distinguish one aspect from another, but a certain *will* is required; and here the will is vulnerable. Warped atrocity stories strike hard at the compassion of the Decent Person. Having accepted the patchwork of melo-history, being furious and aggrieved at the White oppressors, aching for the (uniquely) oppressed Blacks, one is on the face of it a Decent Person. The heart says so, sweeping away inconvenient details. Being White, one is perforce among the guilty, and when one admits as much the confession is good for the soul. We encounter here a stubborn trait of the "liberal" American (less widespread in Britain, but extant): the sensation of doing *the right thing* (the compassionate, ergo the moral thing) is worth almost any degree of humiliation and/or self-deception.¹⁷

NONE OF THIS is meant to belittle the true evils of slavery or to suggest that any form of racism is tolerable. Indeed my argument is exactly the opposite of that; and I would add that moral cogger can help to prevent a vulnerable minority from being overwhelmed and abused with impunity, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world of today. Partly because of it the Black (or, more accurately, the non-White) is no longer excluded from our political and social life as he was even twenty years ago; indeed he is now part of a group in our society which is politically powerful out of all proportion to its actual numbers. One understands the temptation to fake history and so build on that advantage, in order to exact revenge for past and present humiliations. However—in the words of the late Richard Rovere—

"The sucker may be afflicted with nothing but an excess of faith, hope, and charity, and surely there are worse things than that. Political gullibility has political consequences, which can be dangerous."

The urge to decency runs deep in American culture, but so does the instinct for self-defence. This is not likely to favour an artificially powerful minority who press a rigged case for "fair" treatment at the cost of unfairness to everyone else. The

14th amendment to the US Constitution guarantees equal protection of the law regardless of race, creed, or colour. Apostles of "reverse discrimination" or "affirmative action" demand in effect that this amendment be set aside and that "good" (compassionate) discrimination on the grounds of race and colour be enshrined in the law. It does not matter that there is no "starting line" and that no minority ever "catches up" *en masse*. It is more comforting, more satisfying to the Decent Person's compassion to ignore these irritating particulars, and to assume that a fundamentally vengeful discrimination against the "majority" will somehow wipe out all injustice, eliminate social misery and, of course, bring an end to discrimination.

The tremendous forces released by compassion in American public life were once largely effervescent, little more than a source of excitement or passing indignation. The first great protest movement of modern times, against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti (who, it has been forcefully argued, did have a fair trial and were guilty as charged),¹⁸ was fuelled heavily by compassion and failed of its objective. The Nuclear Disarmament movement was based on a "humane" morality, and it too fell far short of its political goals. Even today, when compassion has become really effective in politics, it is an unstable force. There are signs of a growing ambivalence to its exploitation. In the media which still purvey it wholesale, compassion is regarded on the one hand as a foundation of morality and treated earnestly; on the other hand there is a hardening cynicism, a sort of protective response which is sometimes to be found among the public at large.

A VICTIM—innocent or not—can arouse the most complex agonies in those who are made to contemplate his suffering.

Consider this familiar image: high above a crowded street a poor devil is balanced on a narrow ledge. Driven to desperation by some ordeal (of which the crowd may or may not be aware), he is threatening to hurl himself down to a messy death on the pavement. He waves his hands, screams abuse at the people below. They gaze up, but when he does not jump there is no gasp of hope. On the contrary, a hostile mood ignites the crowd. Someone begins to chant, the words roar out as everyone takes them up: "Jump—jump—JUMP—JUMP!" This is no imaginary account. Such scenes have

been reported more than once in recent years, salutary warnings against the ways of public compassion.

Despite its shock to the moral sense, the case of the man on the ledge is not necessarily an instance of gratuitous mob sadism. This fellow may be seen as a blackmailer of sorts. Being too weak and/or unfortunate to cope with his condition himself, the "victim" is attempting to extort the sympathy of the public and make them act on it. His ransom demand is that somebody (anybody, everybody) take up responsibility for his life and its attendant horrors—or else he will inflict on "them" the awful experience of witnessing his death. A hunch may spread through the crowd that the man is really too weak to jump—or that if he does jump he deserves what he gets, since (uncharitable though the idea may be) worthwhile people do not play such games. But is the crowd lusting for blood? When in such cases the victim does jump, the response is not a Roman cheer, but an appalled collective moan. Too late, charity asserts itself—only after plausible resentment has stirred the anger of normally compassionate people. Anger has forced the issue and led to tragedy, leaving little enough innocence either on the ledge or in the street.

THE MAN ON THE LEDGE is a common figure today. He has many incarnations, some fairly benign if clumsy (Aid Agencies, Welfare State Pressure Groups); some arrogant or misguided (promoters of compulsory "affirmative action"); some evil or vicious in their "good" intentions (terrorists, those who justify them with moral cant or atrocity propaganda); and others of more ambiguous character, like some professional protest groups who inject the rant and show of compassion into their cause rather as artificial vitamins are added to processed foods. These last are the least dangerous because we know how to mock them. But our defences are less certain against the figure who has committed

"... the sin which is the spiritual equivalent of usury. He exploited all his misfortunes to the full; he laid them out with cool prudence to bring in the heaviest possible yield of pity. ... He became infinitely cruel. ..."¹⁹

Few of us are immune to the anguish which compassion arouses in the observer, or to an acute anxiety to relieve or at least palliate that anguish. This is why, looking up, we may see the man on the ledge as hostage or terrorist. There is no way of knowing which one we will choose. If it is the terrorist, provoking a howl of "JUMP", one may be revolted—but when that cry functions as legitimate defence against merciless and self-

¹⁸ David Felix, *Protest: Sacco-Vanzetti and the Intellectuals* (1965).

¹⁹ Rebecca West, *A Celebration* (1977), p. 455. The passage describes a real person, a cold-blooded murderer.

righteous demands for pity, there is not much room left for surprise or moral outrage. The riposte is quite natural, a tragic answer to those infinitely cruel exploiters who, swamped in pompous

rectitude or malice, are blind to a hard truth: compassion ruthlessly extorted or imposed is no virtue at all, but an excruciating affliction which may sooner destroy human life than save it.

About Success

"Invidia fortunam odit"

Hell is the most rank-pulling place of all,
The heart of darkness in a neighbour's bungalow,
But what of all those just arriving,
Isn't the world a new scene daily?

A hope in a hat coming into town says
Hell is the most rank-pulling place of all,
Thus spiders spin on tombs and dead economies—
But what of all those just arriving?

Knox on death: "You must put the box in the hole".
A hope in a hat coming into town says
The Youngies v. The Oldies tells it all,
Thus spiders spin on tombs and dead economies.

Young novelists may peak too soon in hell—
Knox on death: "You must put the box in the hole".
Syntax asks where are they now?
The Youngies v. The Oldies tells it all.

Grand Old Men in gardens tell the Press
Young novelists may peak too soon in hell.
Rank and number matter most in queries
Syntax asks. "Where are they now?"

Jesus was a little Lefty prick
Grand Old Men in gardens tell the Press.
A Chat Show Host is not surprised by God,
Rank and number matter most in queries.

Envy and I are very special friends
In case you wondered at my Latin tag.
A Chat Show Host, not surprised by God,
Thinks Jesus was a little Lefty prick.

Peter Porter

DISCUSSION

Between Left & Centre

Labour Party Dilemmas—By FRANK CHAPPLE



“NOW IS THE TIME for all good men to come to the aid of the Centre Party” implores Stephen Haseler in the April issue of ENCOUNTER. But why and who decided that *now* was the time?

1. This is my first criticism of Haseler’s plea—whatever the intrinsic merits of a new

party, history shows not only that such ventures are fraught with failure, but also that the timing of such initiatives is crucial. Timing is vital for a number of reasons, all relating to organisational preparation and the willingness of large numbers to abandon their existing political loyalties and transfer them to a new party.

I am not convinced that the necessary preparation has been undertaken. The idea itself seems to be not so much a product of sustained discussion within the Labour Party as an individual stab in the dark from outside it. The concept of the new party is presented on a virtual take-it or leave-it basis to thousands of Labour activists and voters who have neither been consulted about the immediate viability of the new party nor integrated into its organisational cadre.

One serious consequence may be that by their

precipitate commitment to a new party and the associated uncertainty about its direction, Messrs Jenkins and Haseler have queered the pitch for a successful Centre Party launch at a different and more appropriate time.

2. Uncertainty about direction is my second criticism of the initiative. No one knows what is happening. Is the new party to be a sympathetic wing of the Liberals or a rival to them? Are Roy Jenkins and Stephen Haseler acting as one, or is the former just floating an idea and the second looking for a brighter future for the Social Democratic Alliance? What kind of relationship will the new party have with the trade unions? Is it the new party’s intention to actively try and recruit Tories like Ted Heath, or will its appeal essentially be confined to dissatisfied Labour supporters? How will the new party guard against infiltration and, more importantly, how will it draw its political boundaries on the Left? Will opponents of nuclear power be allowed to join; will supporters of free collective bargaining be allowed to join; will anti-Europeans be tolerated?

None of us to whom Haseler’s appeal is addressed has any clue about the answers to these and a multitude of other such relevant questions. Not only has the notion of the new party been launched as a shot in the dark, but anyone tempted to support it is also completely in the dark about aims and methods.

3. My third criticism of the proposal is that I am by no means sure that the point has yet been reached where many Labour supporters have finally abandoned any hope of reclaiming their Party from the clutches of those who presently rule it. Not only are the doubts of many being offset in reaction to the abrasiveness of Mrs Thatcher’s government but there are also encouraging signs that many trade unions are prepared to support the parliamentary leadership at this year’s Party conference.

Recent events in Britain’s second largest union—the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers—is welcome evidence of this trend. My own personal experience leads me to believe that

FRANK CHAPPLE is one of the leading figures on the British Left and in the trade-union movement. He has been for 14 years the General-Secretary of the “Electricians’ Union”, the EETPU (electronics, telecommunications, plumbing, etc.), and has been a forceful voice in the Labour Party for democratic socialism and against Communist infiltration. His own union—unlike most others—has exemplified open democratic methods (secret ballot, regular elections, independent supervision). He is also a senior member (if, alas, a fairly isolated one at the moment) of the General Council of the Trade Union Congress.

many Labour activists are at least determined to wait until after October before making up their minds about the new party. A major criticism of the centre party proponents is that they have cut themselves off from this process. They cannot share in the argument and the struggle inside the Party to

convince those who try the path of reform. Nor can they hope to split the Party from within since they will have withdrawn from the internal debate. Indeed (and this may be deliberate) the centre party pioneers have made the task of reforming Labour that much harder while also pushing those who

The Two Faces of Trade Unionism

ELECTRICIANS' leader Frank Chapple stunned TUC colleagues yesterday with an unprecedented attack on them and on the state of the trade union movement.

Too many union leaders wore "two faces," he said—one for playing up to the militants in public and one for discussing reality in private. And 20 years of escalating militancy meant that "our movement is morally weaker today than at any time in our history."

Mr Chapple, speaking at his own union's conference in Eastbourne, also denounced the TUC's May 14 Day of Action held last week as a "futile" waste of members' loyalties.

There are bound to be calls for Mr Chapple to be disciplined. He is already out of favour with his TUC colleagues for a previous warning that the Day of Action was nudging the country along the road to a general strike. But in reality there is little they can do. His position on the TUC General Council is fire-proof. His union is the only member of the group he represents and so no other union could put up a rival candidate.

IN ANY EVENT, Mr Chapple had clearly considered the consequences and felt the perils facing the movement were too serious to ignore. He said there were lessons to be learned from May 14.

"For us union leaders, we need to urgently rethink our role and to stop wasting the precious loyalty of union members in futile gestures when there are real battles to be won. . . .

"This union's position is clear. We do not believe in political adventurism and we do not believe that the problems of democracy will be solved on the streets."

Democracy had been destroyed by such methods in pre-war Germany and in Russia.

And in a thinly-veiled criticism of Moss Evans, whose Transport Union gave £5,000 to the Communist newspaper, Mr Chapple said:

"Neither will we be giving any of your hard-earned subscriptions to the Morning Star."

"The Far Left have always derided 'trade union consciousness,' the concentration of workers on representing their interests. They have always wanted to mobilise the strength of organised workers behind their own theories to use them for the revolution, following which the unions become policemen of the workers.

"Normal trade unionists—who are fortunately

the vast majority—have to fight on two fronts. Firstly, to maintain living standards in the face of a major recession, an unfriendly Government and temporarily militant employers. Secondly, to protect their union from political exploitation by a ragbag of Trotskyists and Communists. Both battles are equally important."

Then Mr Chapple turned on his colleagues: "Too many union leaders wear two faces—one in private when they are discussing reality and another when they are posing at the TUC or saying what they think their activists, primarily the political activists, want to hear."

Militants, he said, had failed to find an answer to unfairness in industry, failed to create economic prosperity, failed to banish inflation and unemployment.

"In the last 20 years, the number of strikes and the number of days lost have both been high. But very few active trade unionists could conclude that our movement is morally stronger than it was at the beginning of these two decades.

"I have no doubt . . . that our movement is morally weaker today than at any previous time in our history.

"Sectionalism, selfishness, intimidation, undemocratic practices and an absence of respect or caring are much more the legacy of 20 years' escalating militancy than unity, solidarity, common interest and brotherhood.

"One has only to look at trade unionism in Leyland, with 800 disputes in a year, to see what I mean.

"The snag about militancy, both in using it or trying to curb it, is that attention is focused on symptoms and methods in industrial relations rather than the resolution and containment of conflict."

SWITCHING to ways of repairing the damage, Mr Chapple called for a code of conduct in industrial disputes which would prevent damaging stoppages and assist moves towards higher living standards.

"But above all we need co-operation between the Government and the trade unions. Notwithstanding the difference between us, there is still much which ought not to divide us. . . ."

DAILY MAIL

believe in one more last try into an invidious and morally awkward position.

LET ME EXPLAIN. Every moderate in the Party is already being labelled a potential recruit for the Centre Party—if any of them desire to retain a lingering influence in the Labour Party they will have to dissociate themselves from both the allegation and the inspiration for it. It will be a difficult dilemma between short-term tactical credibility and a possible eventuality. Such a choice will anger moderates and do the new party no good. Many of those who are sympathetic to the principle of “a radical regroupment” may be forced to attack it in the next few months or else dilute their sympathy in a mass of qualifications and hesitations.

I strongly believe that instead of dropping out of the Labour Party, writing it off and demanding that every moderate conform with these amateurish tactics, men like Roy Jenkins should throw themselves into a vigorous and public fight for reform. Instead of fleeing in every direction—to Brussels, to Manchester University; to *Weekend World*, to name only three—I believe that every moderate should enter the fray inside the Party and share the tasks which follow. By consigning themselves to the sidelines, they not only weaken their own standing, they also deprive thousands of Labour supporters who hunger for a battle with leadership and troops. In my view, Roy Jenkins should seek nomination—and even trade union sponsorship—as a Labour MP when his term as President of the EEC expires next year.

OF COURSE, NONE of my criticisms of Stephen Haseler’s appeal for a new party should be misrepresented to mean that I don’t share most of his concern about Labour or that I am indifferent to

the values he argues ought to be represented in political life. I am committed to democracy and the defence of the West; I am opposed to the unfairness in our present electoral system; and I favour less political extremism and the creation of a fairer and social democratic Britain. But declaiming objectives and aims is easy; the difficult problem is the creation of an instrument to uphold and enact them.

I am concerned that distortions in our electoral system and in the balance of many constituencies will suffocate any new party. That is another reason why I believe that the Labour Party should not be immediately written off. This caution is reinforced by another view that I hold: that if a Labour split is inevitable then it should be the Left—and not those who represent millions of working people—who should be forced to quit. The Labour Party has never been the property of quasi-Marxists. The present NEC (National Executive Committee) majority are trespassers; the first objective should be to evict them, not to legitimise their take-over.

One of the major factors which has driven those like Stephen Haseler to despair of the Labour Party has undoubtedly been the distressing behaviour of Parliamentary moderates. Many of these have been so cowardly and ingratiating before the Left that one has to struggle against one’s instincts not to defend them. Wilson and Callaghan have conceded the pass. The formation of the new “middle ground” group in the PLP is another example of the squeamishness and personal cynicism prevalent among so many MPs. Instead of standing up to the Left and campaigning for the democratisation of the party, those who form such factions as “Labour First” twist in every direction to avoid upsetting the militant cabals that they have allowed to grow in their own constituencies. The problem with the Labour Party is not solely that the Left have captured the NEC, but that far too many moderates have not been prepared to risk their own careers and ambitions to combat the take-over.

I believe that the social democratic majority cannot simply yield the Labour Party and surrender it to an unprincipled alliance of the Left. Just because Roy Jenkins might be wrongly excluded from playing his full part in Britain’s affairs is no reason by itself for others to give up defending the traditions of Hugh Gaitskell.

THAT IS WHY I believe we need immediately to form a “Trade Union Campaign to Save the Labour Party.” For many reasons, well-meaning organisations like the “Campaign for Labour Victory” wobble and vacillate because they are so reliant on the half-hearted in the PLP. Those of us who are not dependent for our livelihoods on the wrath of marauding gangs of militants that pop in

Three in Ten

London

THREE IN TEN people would be likely to vote for a centre party if one were formed in time for the next general election, according to a poll carried out by Market & Opinion Research International for the London Evening Standard.

11% of the sample said they would very likely vote for such a party if one were formed. Other figures were: fairly likely, 19%; fairly unlikely, 14%; very unlikely, 43%; do not know, 13%.

Asked who should lead a centre party, those surveyed said: Mr David Steel, 22%; Mr Edward Heath, 16%; Mrs Shirley Williams, 17%; Mr Roy Jenkins, 12%; Mr William Rodgers (Labour MP), 1%.

THE TIMES

and out of some constituency parties are free enough to fight properly. And we should.

A "Trade Union Campaign to Save the Labour Party" should not only resist the dangerous constitutional proposals of the Left, it also should organise to oust the Left majority on the NEC. It should intervene in local parties, consider the best ways that trade union finance should be spent and, overall, endeavour to win a breathing space for the party during which time it can reorganise itself, scrap the wasteful bureaucracy at Head Office, and widen its appeal and activity among ordinary people.

MY LAST CRITICISM of the new Centre Party appeal concerns an interest close to my own heart—the position of trade unions in politics.

Both Jenkins and Haseler have attacked what they regard as the harmful influence of trade unions in Britain's political and industrial life. Moreover, they both dislike trade-union affiliation to the Labour Party; and Jenkins, in particular, has specifically declared that a trade-union rescue of the moderates—such as I have proposed above—would be unacceptable and no solution at all. I find this a difficult argument. I am not totally unsympathetic towards its thrust, but at the same time it seems unreal and utopian.

To begin with, the trade unions are not going to easily sever their organisational attachment to Labour; and, second, one has to have an order of priorities. The greatest danger in the Labour Party

is not trade-union bloc-voting, or even that the interests of its industrial and political wings conflict far too often for comfort. The first danger is the Leftward drift. That has to be stopped. Trade union support is vital for this purpose. It should be recruited—a "Trade Union Campaign to Save the Labour Party" would be the relieving force.

Of course, the fact of this rescue may lead some to believe that moderates should be "beholden to the unions" as a result; but this is a subsequent battle and not the first.

I am not opposed to changes in the bloc-voting system nor to a realistic debate about the widening gulf between those who seek political reform and those who elevate producer-group interests above the well-being of society as a whole. It is my belief, however, that the best prospect for change in this direction lies within the trade union movement itself and not in the confusion of a fourth party.

MY CRITICISMS OF Stephen Haseler's appeal for the centre party are not absolute. If the Labour Left finally emerge rampantly triumphant—and if Labour moderates blur the differences between Marxism and Social Democracy and continue to appease the former while dissociating themselves from the latter—then clearly the necessity for a new party might become overwhelming.

But I do not feel that this moment has yet been reached. We may be nearing the banks of the Rubicon; we have still to cross it, and sadly I fear that a premature attempt may not only drown the impatient but terrify the majority.

Signs and Wonders

In that case, what is the question?

GERTRUDE STEIN

Like
the slow slur in the black of a snagged
soundtrack, suddenly

the whole bloody lot
stops.
The tub thumped once too often: the bottom drops out.

Too many eels from the Lake of Bolsena
stewed in Vernaccia wine
did for Simon de Brie, Pope Martin IV.

Try what you will. Useless.
Those too who keep back the price of survival
shall drop dead, like Ananias.

Michael Hulse



Unlikely Facts & Explanations

The Boggle Threshold

By Renée Haynes

IT IS USEFUL to look at reactions to psychical research in terms of what may be called the Boggle Threshold, the point at which the mind boggles . . . a concept which can be linked up neatly with that of the more familiar pain threshold by William James's shrewd remark that there is no pain like the pain of a new idea. The one is connected with physiological ease, the other with psychological ease. Both are lowered by fear and anxiety.

THIS is one of a series of columns planned by ARTHUR KOESTLER, for which he acts as editorial adviser; his article "Horizons in Space" inaugurated the series in the October 1979 issue. It seems that "the new frontier" lies not between the sciences and the humanities, but on the peripheries of contemporary science itself. This department is mainly concerned with those border areas, from cosmology to psychology, which are of special relevance to both cultures.

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The pain threshold varies from one person to another, probably from one culture to another and quite certainly in varying circumstances. The higher its level, the longer it takes for its owner to become conscious of pain, to realise that he personally is being hurt; and this even though his body may already have been moved to some reflex action to deal with the trouble, like blinking at strong light, or automatically slapping a mosquito as it settles on a bare leg before biting. This level is probably higher among extraverts than among introverts. It is known to be higher in primitive communities than in sophisticated peoples. It was for instance very high indeed in certain Red Indian tribes, and also among the Australian and Australasian aborigines observed by T. H. Huxley when serving as assistant surgeon and naturalist on HMS *Rattlesnake's* four-and-a-half year cruise to survey the reefs between Australia and Borneo. Huxley noted with lively interest that some of them were walking about apparently untroubled by open wounds and sometimes even broken bones, injuries that would have crippled the European sailors of the day, tough though they were.¹ The pain threshold also varies in one individual at different times and in different circumstances; thus soldiers in the heat of battle often fight on without noticing they have been hurt, and, more peacefully, a man absorbed in interesting work does not become aware of toothache till he goes to bed.

Where the pain threshold concerns the interaction of the body with the psyche brought about by some physical stimulus, the Boggle Threshold concerns the interaction between the psyche and the mind brought about by some intellectual stimulus, the impact of some awkward unknown fact or idea. Both are biologically useful, within limits. Physical suffering that rises above the pain threshold warns the sufferer to do something about its cause: to go to the dentist, to bandage a blistered heel, to rest a broken limb. He should neither ignore it nor become a hypochondriac. The mental suffering, shock, or anxiety generated by an awareness of something unexplained that rises above the boggle threshold also warns the sufferer to do something about its cause. A sudden growl in tropical undergrowth, the sight of a strange light skimming through the dark sky, must put a man on the alert. His bodily survival may depend on getting away from a wild animal or avoiding a bomb. His intellectual equilibrium may similarly depend on his ability to find out the origin, the meaning, the possible consequences of a totally unexpected event or a completely alien idea: to discover whether it

¹ My grandmother, T. H. Huxley's eldest daughter, who had been devoted to him and remembered vividly his sayings and doings, often discussed this episode and its implications with me when I was growing up.

can be fitted into what he already knows about; whether there is a perfectly comprehensible explanation; whether someone is lying to him for ulterior motives (as smugglers used to fabricate "haunts" to safeguard their own activities, as Victorian nursemaids used to threaten naughty children with bogies, as a con-man offers gilt for gold); or whether he has to face the appalling insecurity of realising that his working model of the nature of things is inadequate. The alternative is to reject fact and idea alike in self-protective rage.

IT IS NECESSARY for human beings to try to make sense of everything that happens, to account in comprehensible, logical terms for all that goes on. Though thunder may in one time and place be labelled *the Hammer of Thor*, and in another "an electrical phenomenon", in each case the fact that it has been given a diagnosis and fitted into an existing pattern begins to dispel the panic of confronting total mystery, the paralysing terror that the universe is ultimately incomprehensible, and that human experience reflects nothing but a meaningless jostle of events, "one damn thing after another..."

To prevent this near breakdown of reason among those who cannot suspend judgment but must have instant certainty, existing concepts are often elaborated with ever-increasing elegance and complexity—as happened with that beautiful off-beam work of art, Ptolemaic astronomy—and interconnected with ever-increasing precision. In the end it is as if dwarfs deep in the caverns of the mind were forging and assembling such concepts into inflexible, impenetrable suits of intellectual armour to defend timid champions of thought against *anything* new; as if, like late medieval knights so heavily encased in mail that once thrown to ground they could not get up again, their minds were made powerless by the weight of the carefully linked concepts constructed to protect them, and their tempers were correspondingly brought to the boil as they lie on their backs kicking and clashing their steely legs.

² Lavoisier is said to have made this remark in 1768. On 13 September of that year a very hot stone was seen and heard to fall from the sky with a whistling noise by some of the inhabitants of the French village of Lucé. The local Abbé sent a piece of it to the Académie des Sciences in Paris, of which Lavoisier was a distinguished member. Disregarding the eyewitness evidence, he and his colleagues decided it was an ordinary stone that had been struck by lightning.

³ Prospero Lambertini, *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et de Beatorum Canonizatione* (Bologna, 1738). See also Renée Haynes, *Philosopher King, the Humanist Pope Benedict XIV* (London, 1970).

⁴ *Sunday Times* Colour Supplement, 13 January 1980.

THE BOGGLE THRESHOLD can be seen in action in pretty well every human context. In the most primitive of all it can apparently be so high as to prevent people so much as perceiving something totally unfamiliar and incomprehensible; as happened when the Australian aborigines apparently failed to see Captain Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*, when she anchored within half-a-mile of them in April 1770. They completely ignored her presence, but when boats were lowered they reacted instantly. They knew what boats were; they made and used their own.

At a slightly more advanced stage of development, the Boggle Threshold may involve the rejection of a new idea, and the reinterpretation of its embodiment in old terms: as when members of another primitive culture, faced with a working railway engine, rejected (or perhaps more simply, ignored) the idea of a self-moving machine in favour of the belief that this object was a god, and that its spirit could possess its devotees. (Did the minds of small boys work like this as they rushed about whistling and puffing in the days of steam trains?)

A similar mental process moved the learned Lavoisier to reject eye-witness accounts of the fall of meteorites, for the sound commonsense reason that "stones cannot fall from the sky as there are no stones in the sky."² As he had not seen such events for himself he was able to dismiss reports of them as fraudulent or superstitious or deluded, or all three. Even if he *had* seen them for himself he might well have rejected later on his memory of what had happened; there are several instances on record in which the boggled mind in its discomfort has worked retrospectively to obliterate the impression of an event that "could not possibly have happened", or to reinterpret it as a mistake, an illusion, a fever dream.

Lavoisier's near-contemporary, the ecclesiastical lawyer-scientist-historian Prospero Lambertini (who became Pope Benedict XIV) was more cautious; he defended Livy against those who accused him of credulity in describing a shower of stones, advanced a possible natural explanation, and wrote firmly that it was wrong to assume *either* that reports of unusual occurrences were false *or* that the occurrences were miraculous.³

Later examples of a low Boggle Threshold are to be found in those 19th-century doctors who confidently ascribed to "shamming" the fact that a patient had shown no sign of pain while having his leg amputated under hypnotic anaesthesia; and more recently in the reaction of a very intelligent old lady to some horrifying coloured pictures of members of an isolated African tribe who had inherited a gene producing two-toed feet.⁴ She insisted for a while that such things *could not* happen, and that the people photographed must be wearing lobster-clawed appliances over normal

limbs. She finally yielded to persuasion; but as in many instances of this kind there lingered an echo of that ancient rhyme:

*A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still.*

INDIVIDUAL BOGGLE THRESHOLDS will vary, of course, with individual temperament, history, training, and aptitude. They will also be influenced by those of the groups to which each individual is linked: family, friends, school, employment, university. In people brought up in the discipline of the physical sciences the levels of boggledom are likely to differ considerably from the levels found in those brought up in the humanities. Members of the first school may well react sharply, for instance, against evidence that some unknown animal exists; rightly in the case of “men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders”, wrongly in the cases of the anthropophagi, the gorilla, and the okapi, and who knows with what justification in the cases of the Abominable Snowman and the Loch Ness Monster. On the other hand, humanities students—like me—may tend to ignore or to reject mathematical generalisations about living creatures, especially people, rather as Disraeli rejected “lies, damned lies and statistics” to which might now be added computer-judgments. (Consciously and conscientiously one may attempt to raise one’s own level; but the instant gut-reaction persists and has to be taken into account.)

Again, the Boggle Thresholds of those who read the “heavies”—*The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*—will be lower in some respects and higher in others than the Boggle Thresholds of those who read “the pops.” The former may accept sociological forecasts without adverse reaction; the latter may not jib at the astrological predictions for their birthdays (unless of course these are very disagreeable). Moreover, a bland assumption that something can be taken for granted, accepted as *fact*, will have a powerful effect on all groups, from the academic to the barely literate. Recall Charles II’s request that the learned members of the newly founded Royal Society for the Advancement of Science should find out why it was that if you put goldfish into a brimming bowl of water it did not overflow. Various members came to the next meeting with carefully worked out theoretical explanations. But the King was there, with a bowl and some goldfish; and as he slipped them gently in, it was plain to be seen that the water dripped

correspondingly out. No one had questioned the basis of the scientific enquiry made by that earnest Royal seeker after truth.

And yet again the Boggle Threshold is influenced profoundly by the epoch in which a man lives: its rooted assumptions, its current ideas, the whole temporal landscape. This is particularly important in connection with psychical research. As long as its disconcerting raw materials—telepathy, clairvoyance, time-displacement in the form of precognition or retrocognition, psychokinesis observed as the inexplicable movement of objects or people—could be accommodated in the very loosely woven general hypothesis attributing them to the activities of invisible beings, it was intellectually possible to accept them as real, and to discuss them with some equanimity, as St Augustine did, within the cosmology of his time.

The Roman Emperors themselves had been afraid of sorcerers, witches, astrologers; Tiberius drove these last underground (and had considerable difficulty later on, when he wanted to consult one). Then ancient Rome disintegrated, and the consequent chaos intensified old fears. The influx of barbarian tribes with their savage, primitive rites and beliefs whipped them into a terror of all invisible beings but God, the angels, and the saints. The Boggle Threshold was high but fright made it almost impossible to investigate fact. The hypothesis held good, but most of the “invisibles” it involved were assumed to be powerfully and fatally evil.

THE PANIC DIMINISHED as the slow generations went by. Towards the end of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville could write an encyclopaedia⁵ examining with detachment various forms of magic; and noting with regard to religious revelation that there are three kinds of vision—through the eyes of the body, through the eyes of the mind, and through the soul’s imagination. By the 13th century Thomas Aquinas could note that “natural prophecy” was associated with certain temperaments and certain situations and could even be observed in animals.⁶ It can still be seen in them probably as telepathy and as clairvoyance (in so far as direction-finding is concerned), and certainly in the precognition of earthquakes (now ascribed to special sensitivity to changes in the earth’s magnetic field). The way lay open to the discovery of *psi* in its biological aspects: and it was followed for years until a sudden change, a self-defensive change in the Boggle Threshold took place.

That great plague, the Black Death, reactivated terror: terror transformed itself into rage; rage exploded into persecution, especially the persecution of witches, to whose cooperation with malevolent spirits all evils could be ascribed. The growth of mathematical thinking and the swift

⁵ Isidore of Seville (560–636), *Etymologiae*. Cited by Lynn Thorndyke in *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1923).

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: De Veritate*.

development of technology then brought into being a new framework of thought, blessedly unemotional, blessedly objective, blessedly amenable to independent checking. With this there arose the assumption that the universe could be envisaged as a vast complex machine: an analogy increasingly popular and powerful in which there was no room for "spirits." This, of course, ruled out the working hypothesis which had previously accommodated most *psi* phenomena; and made it very difficult to acknowledge their existence. Because they did not fit into the new pattern of explanation, or, worse still, because they might threaten its adequacy, the evidence for them was ascribed to fraud, delusion, or superstition. This was safer than admitting even the remote possibility that any occurrence could contravene the painfully established "laws of nature." It was as if an inscription over the gates of science should run: *No Observation without Explanation*; and another over the turnstiles should read: *Facts not admitted unless accompanied by respectable Hypotheses. Should the latter fail to satisfy the authorities, both will be requested to leave the premises immediately.*

Bold persons who tried to dodge such edicts, and to draw official attention to freshly observed data by dressing them up in some unreliable or out-of-fashion scientific idiom, laboured in vain. Because their verbal clothing was—rightly—not accepted, the data themselves were rejected; it was as if some expert with much to contribute were to be thrown out of a conference, bag and baggage, because he wore knee-breeches. The most vivid example of this is the case of poor Mesmer, whose discoveries about hypnosis were unfortunately put forward in terms of "animal magnetism." Directly a scientific committee headed by Benjamin Franklin correctly pronounced that magnetism as such was not involved, the facts were kicked away with the formula.

BOTH classical and medieval writers (Aristotle and Aquinas for instance) had noted that extrasensory experiences occurred much more often among the illiterate than among thinkers trained to concentrate attention on whatever matter was at hand, ignoring all irrelevant and distracting impressions in general. Now they also began to be conditioned to reject—if it *should*, improbably, happen—awareness of *psi* phenomena in particular; these above all must not be allowed to overflow into consciousness, lest they should carry with them the germs of "chaos and old night."

⁷ Originally reported in *Grenzgebiete der Wissenschaft*, ed. Dr Hans Benda (Freiburg im Bresgau). English translation by Manfred Cassirer in *The Journal of Paraphysics* (No. 24, 1968).

THE BOGGLE THRESHOLD sank to an unprecedented depth among intellectuals, a depth soon so widely accepted by the majority of educated people as to become a status symbol, social as well as academic, though poets, painters, women and romantics, a few philosophers and some theologians were not affected to the same extent. It is, incidentally, fascinating that the whole concept of the Boggle Threshold was first set out in a theological context under the name of "invincible ignorance"—the state of a man whose entire intellectual and emotional inheritance, background, education and training made it impossible for him to understand or accept Christianity, a state for which he could not be held responsible. In this same context, it is also plain to see how heavily verbal misunderstanding may weigh the Boggle Threshold down; as in the case of the Victorian scientist who protested that angels could not exist, because they would need chests like pouter pigeons if their bone structure had to support the weight of their wings. He had no idea that by an angel was meant a non-physical being whose presence could make itself known by evoking a visual image in the human mind.

The rise and spread of Spiritualism in the middle of the 19th century provoked in the scientific Establishment a shudder painful as that of a snail of one species when it is struck by a love-dart from another of an alien kind. The whole thing seemed to be bogus, in very bad taste, and what used to be called Non-U. It was largely accepted by uncritical, unscientific, undistinguished people with a vague genteel vocabulary, who put forward terribly naive theories to account for what was alleged to go on, and often did not concern themselves to investigate the truth of those allegations.

The movement had begun in 1848 with a poltergeist haunting in the Fox household at Hydesville, Arcadia, New York; and it seems for a while to have conformed to the pattern of such outbreaks. These usually start with a spontaneous explosion of phenomena: with strange noises, rappings, the inexplicable movement of objects (from stones to saucepans to heavy furniture) and in our own day with electrical equipment going berserk, as happened in the famous Rosenheim case in 1967–68.⁷ These phenomena take place for the most part around one person (and very occasionally around two persons deeply involved with one another, as a mother and daughter may be). It looks as if they are connected with some very profound emotional disturbance, whose cause cannot always be pinpointed, though frustration, repressed anger, and the somatopsychic stresses of puberty are often suspect. The external disturbance often eases the internal one; but its unconscious source, the "poltergeist-focus" who has come to enjoy the excitement generated within the household and the attention directed upon it, often

feels impelled to keep things going, and since the original energy has evaporated past recall uses the perfectly normal methods of conscious faking. Investigators then move in, discover what is being done, discount the evidence of what happened in the first place, and glibly attribute everything to fraud.

The archetypal instance of this occurred with Frank Podmore, an early member of the Society for Psychical Research, who looked into a few outbreaks that were in the final stage and came up with the useful theory that all such happenings could be attributed to the tricks of some "naughty little girl"! This remained popular for many years, despite the insistence of Andrew Lang, an anthropologist President of the Society, that there was reliable evidence in many cases for the movement of objects far too heavy for any little girl to shift, however naughty she might be; that rappings and other noises had gone on when the suspect was in bed, closely watched; and that poltergeist upheavals had been recorded by reliable observers in many different parts of the world, often among people who had never heard of such occurrences. But the "naughty little girl" theory accorded too well with the boggle threshold of the time to be shifted. No one important took much notice of Lang's remarks; and Sir William Crookes' reports on what would now be called psychokinesis were rejected as "impossible." ("I never said it was possible," Crookes replied, "I said it was true.")⁸

INTELLECTUAL HACKLES will of course be less likely to rise, bringing their Boggle Thresholds behind them, if data so far unexplained can be fitted by way of analogy into a familiar network of everyday experience. Thus the whole concept of telepathy (already evidenced and set forth in that scholarly and well-documented piece of research, *Phantasms of the Living*⁹) has become more acceptable since "listening to the wireless" turned from a novelty into a habit over the last half-century or so, and the catch-phrase "brain waves" became a potent symbol. Even though successful

experiments in telepathic transmission to people inside a "Faraday cage" (a room-sized hollow cube whose walls exclude electromagnetic waves and electrostatic effects, so that a radio set taken inside it will not work once the door has been shut) have shown the analogy to be extremely shaky, the implications of the symbol very hard to justify, the notion of extrasensory perception is much less likely than before to provoke contempt, automatic rejection, or *furor scholasticus*. And, interestingly enough, the phrase "thought transference", with its mechanist imagery so eminently respectable in the 1880s, has sunk without trace.

On a rather firmer basis, advances in psychosomatic medicine have made it possible to accept in a new framework of ideas data to which the usual late-Victorian boggle threshold reacted by crashing like a broken lift into the basement. Where a century ago the average educated man rejected with intellectual rage (and some social superiority) any and all reports of witchcraft at work in producing sickness, accident, or even death, his modern counterpart can accept and investigate them in connection with what is already known about the effects of powerful suggestion.¹⁰

IT HAD BEEN HOPED quite early on in modern psychical research to lower the scientific boggle threshold by carrying out experiments whose results could be evaluated in statistical terms, and compared with those that might have been expected by pure chance. This kind of quantitative work, begun in England and France, was enormously extended by Dr J. B. Rhine in the United States during the 1930s,¹¹ and by others in various parts of the world as time went on. The effect was patchy. There were those who could not accept the useful, paranoid, overall theory that large numbers of university men and women in different countries were engaged in a vast conspiracy to deceive the public. But there were all too many others who, though they might not have formulated their thoughts in this way, tacitly inclined towards it, for two main reasons.

One was the predictable reaction that the experiments had not been carried out properly, that the proper protocol had not been observed, that not enough or adequate safeguards had been used, or if used, enforced; that the statistical methods employed were unsatisfactory; and basically, that as the results could not be true, carelessness, misrepresentation or fraud *must* be postulated.

The other reason was that the experiments were not strictly replicable, would not yield the same results whenever and wherever and by whomever they were carried out. The "decline effect"—which came of intense boredom with hours of guessing which of several meaningless designs was to be envisaged, and showed at any rate that the *psi*

⁸ See R. G. Medhurst, K. M. Goldney, and M. R. Barrington, *Crookes and the Spirit World* (London, 1972). Sir William Crookes, FRS, OM, served as President of the Society for Psychical Research in 1896-97 and as President of the Royal Society for 1898.

⁹ Edmund Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living* (London, 1886).

¹⁰ These were explored in a fascinating correspondence in the *British Medical Journal* on and off throughout the 1960s, in Dr J. C. Barker's book *Scared to Death* (London, 1968) and in Dr Stephen Black's *Mind and Body* (London, 1969).

¹¹ See, for instance, J. B. Rhine, *Extra Sensory Perception* (Boston, 1934), *The Reach of the Mind* (London, 1948), and, with J. G. Pratt, *Parapsychology* (London, 1968).

faculty, unlike conjuring, was inhibited rather than perfected by repetition—appeared sooner or later in the records of even the most successful subjects. All subjects, moreover, tended to achieve more significant scores with some experimenters—cheerful, extrovert, enthusiastic—than with shy, cautious academics. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone for some time that experiments eminently suitable for research in the physical sciences were not necessarily the best models for experiments to test a faculty with deep biological roots.

PERHAPS I SHOULD state that my motto is *not* Down with the Boggle Threshold! It is normal, necessary, and useful in every context—and in

that of psychical research it is essential if the line is to be drawn between mystery and mystagogy, as indispensable a piece of work as to trace that separating mathematics from numerology. The existence of this threshold, however, needs to be recognised and reckoned with, its level needs to be examined consciously and constantly, and kept low enough for the mind to admit evidence for hard angular facts, however difficult it may be to fit them into an existing pattern. It should, on the other hand, be kept high enough to eliminate “explanations” that are no more than phosphorescent verbiage (like an overheard definition of the aura as “*The Be-ness of Non-Being*”, presumably in the speaker’s bonnet), and to reject hypotheses that do not bear testing and the wilder vagaries of science fiction or of “occult thrillers” presented as fact.

How Is It?

How is it, when those alone
With imaginary sparse beards, those
Antique atavists, those short of intellect
And breath, go on believing now
They will be living
After death?

How is it, when we know our marvellous
Mechanism, without pulse of blood, breaks
In decay, though orientated by the toes
To an impossible
Resurrection Day?

How is it, when we know there will be no
Future hunting, no need for real or token
Steeds in our graves, Château Yquem in beakers,
Or clay
Female slaves,

How is it then, that past the obit in *The Times*
Among the cemetery lines, we bend,
Read, revere, it seems, only that
Invisible husk which now is no
More than
Calcium and dust?

Geoffrey Grigson

LETTERS

“Ideology Rules, OK?”

I HAVE READ with great interest Alain Besançon's remarks about the importance of understanding ideology [*“East of Eden”*, *ENCOUNTER*, June] if one is to comprehend the meaning of Communist despotism in the contemporary world. I can assure him that Americans, no less than Europeans, are seriously puzzled by this Western propensity to political mindlessness or, at best, insensitivity. Yet these mental deficiencies occur even among groups which are saturated with ideology. I refer to the various factions on the Left, and your readers would, I think, be interested in the recent debate I heard between one US socialist leader, Michael Harrington, and the spokesman for the Social Democrats USA, Carl Gershman.

The ideological gulf is clear between these two *idéologues*. Harrington takes a “third” position between the two super-powers, and in the case of the Afghanistan invasion raised the slogan: “Americans Stay Home—Russians Go Home.” This is indeed a curious kind of ideological neutralism, as if both sides were equally responsible for the crisis . . . and, as Gershman put it, “as if the extremely unlikely prospect of American intervention was as great a source of danger as the extremely likely prospect that the Soviets would not withdraw. . . .”

Perhaps a little bit of ideology, as Besançon suggests, could be intellectually helpful—but can you be “a little bit pregnant”? The thing tends to grow on you. In the Harrington-Gershman debate, it was clear that the issues were not the pragmatic ones of whether or not the US draft should be reinstated, or Euromissiles deployed, or whether we can have both “guns and butter.” It was, quite simply, whether or not we in the West should resist the advance of Soviet totalitarian imperialism.

Harrington sees only the dangers of Western responses. Every slight movement of democratic Western will might lead to War, or to an Arms Race, or to Polarisation, or at the very least to more disagreeable Inflation. And here, in the following quote, is the ideological nub of the argument.

“If these risks were being run for a good reason—say, the struggle against fascism—those of us who are not pacifists might well advocate taking them.”

Gershman's reply—which was, I suppose, also “ideological” in its way—was realistic and effective:

“But if this is true for the struggle against fascism, why is it not also true for the struggle against Communism? Is Communism less oppressive or less reactionary? Does it kill fewer people or produce fewer refugees? Is it less threatening to humanity? On the contrary, today it is more threatening. Then why this unwillingness to oppose it?”

The answer offered is: “ideological delusion.” There is still a kind of “infantile Leftism” in certain wings of the socialist movement, even a curious outbreak of “neo-Trotskyism.” It innocently sees Communism as a deformed version of socialism, but one that still is, in some

mystically essential way, progressive. They search the world for some small corner where a revolution has happened and—for the first time and at long last!—the true good society will be built. When Moscow fails, they turn to Peking. When Maoism is unmasked, they still revere Fidel Castro.

MANKIND, THE POET SAID, cannot bear very much reality; but ideology very obviously can withstand massive onslaughts! There is still on the American Left—and I suspect they are not alone in their delusions—a feeling that Castro is a Man of the People. Even if the people desert him in droves! Can they face the spectacle of tens of thousands of common people desperately seeking, despite 20 years of “political education” and “raising consciousness”, to flee Cuba? How can it be a crime against the People for the people to vote (in Lenin's phrase) “with their feet”? Do they deserve to be called worms and scum by the régime and beaten by rent-a-crowd mobsters? Why isn't a populist ideology upset when a populace, forced to pay a Hitlerian head tax (\$3,000), kneels down upon their arrival in Costa Rica or a US shore and kiss the earth because they are “free at last”?

I wonder whether the record of the European Left is, as Alain Besançon might desperately want to reassure himself, any more clear-sighted. Gershman, in any case, is equally desperate, as a Social Democrat who keeps on trying to crack the hard-and-fast patterns of delusion and self-deception.

“What does it take to make the scales fall from the eyes of the blind? Is the testimony of a Solzhenitsyn or a Sakharov or a Huber Matos not enough? Must the world be flooded with refugees fleeing Communism before the truth about it shall be revealed? Is it necessary to live under Communism in order to understand it? . . .”

Ideology rules, OK?

MARTIN LONGMAN

New York City

“Australian Misunderstandings”

I FEAR THAT Dr Knöpfelmacher's letter [*ENCOUNTER*, March] may have compounded misunderstandings of the public issues in Australia which he sought to clarify. Since I am mentioned by him by name and my role in the “Bennett affair” interpreted in a curious fashion and subjected to attack, I feel bound to reply.

Dr Knöpfelmacher characterises my relation to Mr Bennett as one of “sterling loyalty.” Your readers may wish to be reminded that Mr Bennett, whilst secretary of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties, embraced and publicised his personal contention that the Nazis did not intend the general murder of European Jews. It goes (or should go) without saying that in Australia, as anywhere else on the globe, this is properly regarded as arrant and offensive nonsense. I think it is fair to say that, as they stood early last year, Mr Bennett's views astonished the Civil Liberties movement throughout the country. The general consternation was fortified by his excellent record as an effective worker for civil liberties and militant opposition to anti-Semitism for over a dozen years.

At an early stage in the affair, as a civil liberties

spokesman, I defended Mr Bennett's right to state such a case on the ground that error has rights, including the right to be corrected. This defence was not the result of any external prompting. At the same time I personally and publicly contested his opinions and provided ample source data for their refutation.

The affair underwent a sudden and dramatic change when Mr Bennett declared "The Holocaust" a "Zionist lie", an aspect of the Butz "thesis" he had personally assured me that he did not endorse. I therefore promptly and publicly condemned his views which now clearly constituted group defamation and secured a motion for a general meeting of members to dislodge him from office.

Since this action was taken last November and publicised in the press, I am at a loss to know how Dr Knöpfelmacher, in a letter published in March, finds it possible to describe my attitude to Mr Bennett as one of "sterling loyalty." The contrary is true; I have acted as my conscience dictated throughout this affair and put sentiment to one side in doing so.

The "Bennett affair" is now effectively concluded. Despite his attempts to obstruct a general meeting, he has been voted out of office and is no longer a member of our organisation.

Since then, events have moved forward. A "Holocaust" exhibition is being arranged in Melbourne, with the vigorous assistance of the West German Embassy, to place the character of Nazi atrocities beyond any challenge. Jewish community organisations have cooperated actively with the Civil Liberties movement, and their disquiet at this affair is abating.

Dr Knöpfelmacher's own alarm and disquiet are understandable. However, since his intellectual reputation stands high both here and overseas, it is all the more important to clear up his errors of interpretation. They do not stop at his negative conclusions as to my own actions. He chooses also to write off Australians as naïve and ignorant of European politics. I have the reverse impression. Once the threat of Japanese invasion receded, Australian eyes were fixated on war maps of Europe. Moreover, the wave of immigration from the European continent has given European politics an immediacy which is daily apparent through the media. For these reasons, it is simply not true that Australians view the Holocaust as "a controversial issue." To suggest that it is so invites public ridicule. The Holocaust Memorial Exhibition being held in Melbourne simply puts a further seal on received opinion.

Finally, I cannot let pass Dr Knöpfelmacher's slur on West German diplomats in Australia. They have behaved with dignity and integrity throughout this trying episode.

ALAN HUGHES

*President
Victorian Council for Civil Liberties
Parkville, Victoria
Australia*

JOHN BENNETT opened his campaign against the Holocaust victims in the Australian mass media in January 1979. The most damaging wave of the campaign took place between January and April. Alan Hughes says that he started to move officially against Bennett in November. Is this "prompt"? Mr Hughes had contended that while Mr Bennett held "erroneous" views on the Holocaust as a private individual this in no way disabled him to be Secretary of the Victorian Council for Civil

Liberties (of which Mr Hughes is President), and he continued to fortify Mr Bennett's standing by stressing in public his qualities as a civil-libertarian.

Nobody ever disputed Mr Bennett's right to state "error." But as Holocaust survivors we were naturally concerned at the dissemination of an "error" which alleged that we had acquired a fake crown of martyrdom by fabricating sob-stories about exterminated families, so as to be able to steal land from poor Arabs and extort cash from German authorities.* All these claims are contained in Butz's opus, which was distributed *en masse* and with explicit approval of content by the Secretary of a Civil Liberties organisation.

Those who have read my letter (ENCOUNTER, March) will know that I did not "write off Australians as naïve and ignorant of European politics." What I tried to explain was their inability (exemplified by taking the Butz-Bennett thesis seriously) to deal adequately with European issues which require specific historical experience and participant observation in addition to abstract understanding alone. The problem is a staple theme of Australian commentators and historians concerned with the problems of an industrial civilisation geographically isolated from its own metropolitan resources. It is debated under such headings as "the Lucky Country" or "the Tyranny of Distance", catchphrases now known to virtually every educated Australian.

FRANK KNÖPFELMACHER

University of Melbourne

*I note the following item in today's *Times* (London, 17 July):

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"Manchester University students are proposing to picket the university building in which a religious organization called The Way is holding a meeting today, in protest at the organization's allegedly antisemitic teachings.

"The meeting is for members of the organization in Britain and abroad, and the parent body, The Way International, has circulated from its headquarters in the United States a notice advising those attending to read several books of an antisemitic nature, including

The Myth of the Six Million and *The Hoax of the Century*.

"Both books argue that the Nazi genocide of the Jews did not happen, but was a story invented by Jewish interests. The British branch, The Way in Great Britain, has denied that it is antisemitic.

"Sir George Kenyon, chairman of the university council, said: 'The university greatly regrets that the booking was accepted.'"

The Controversy over World War II Bombing

A Reply to Lord Zuckerman—By W. W. ROSTOW

THIS IS A FOOTNOTE to the lively debate in your columns between Lord Zuckerman and Professor C. P. Kindleberger (ENCOUNTER, November 1978 and June 1979). In the end, Lord Zuckerman contrasts his views, based on "empirical evidence", with those of the "theoreticians": i.e. Kindleberger and his colleagues in the Enemy Objectives Unit (EOU) of the US Embassy in London.

The empirical evidence Lord Zuckerman refers to as the basis for his pre-*D-Day* recommendations for transport bombing in Western Europe derived from his study of the effects of transport bombing in Italy and Sicily in 1943—the so-called "Sicily Report."

Zuckerman concluded that the bombing of marshalling yards had proved much more efficient than the bombing of bridges. "Marshalling-yards" advocates held that about 1,200 tons of bombs were required to take out a bridge. (W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. III, p. 157.) According to the official minutes of a meeting on 6 May 1944, Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, on the basis of such estimates, held that "bridges were a difficult target, and he did not want to see a waste of effort at this time." After being pressed by Brigadier Richardson (21st Army Group) and Air Marshal Coningham (2nd Tactical Air Force), he agreed that sometime before *D-Day* experimental attacks might be mounted on the Seine and Meuse bridges by tactical bombers and fighter bombers. The next day, in an attack by 48 fighter bombers of the Ninth Air Force, which had been straining at the leash, the Vernon bridge was dropped into the Seine and three others badly damaged. Statistically, the results were a sport; but from that time bridges were "in."

THE FACT IS that EOU read the "Sicily Report" with great care in early 1944 and decided—on the basis of its text as opposed to its summary and conclusions—that the bombing of bridges had been quite efficient. They buttressed their view with later evidence flowing from the Mediterranean where bridge bombing was systematically undertaken in the early months of 1944, after the departure of Tedder and Zuckerman for London. In a memorandum of 8 February 1944, EOU (on the basis of damage reports from the Mediterranean over the period October 1943–January 1944) had estimated bridge blockage required 196 tons. These and similar calculations circulated among the commands in London during the early months of 1944; for General Eaker and Air Chief Marshal Slessor, in the Mediterranean, took a

quite different view of the matter than Tedder and Zuckerman.

THE CHARACTER OF Zuckerman's overestimate of what was required to take out a bridge is suggested by the following. On pages 56 and 57 of his "Sicily Report" two tables are supplied relating mean tonnage dropped in 62 raids of varying density on rail and road bridges to the proportion of raids which achieved hits, blockage, or the impeding of traffic by any means. In rough-and-ready terms they show that the expenditure of 4,500 tons cut or half-destroyed twelve bridges, blocked or otherwise impeded traffic in fifteen other cases. A crude, but conservative estimate would have suggested something like 375 tons were required per blocked bridge. I recently subjected these data to regression analysis to establish the requirements they implied for an 80% probability under each of the three categories using a conservative hyperbolic exponential equation, in which one approaches but never reaches 100%. The results, as they flowed from the computer, were these:

	Tonnage	
	RAIL	ROAD
80% hit	396.51	300.17
80% blocked	409.11	319.25
80% traffic impeded	125.45	308.49

The average tonnage actually required to block the Seine bridges before *D-Day* proved to be about 220 per bridge (G. A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, p. 228). That is, the 1944 Western European experience proved to be roughly consistent with 1943 experience in the Mediterranean.

Zuckerman's more than five-fold error in interpreting the empirical evidence of the Italy and Sicily campaigns not only contributed to a quite unnecessary conflict over transport bombing in support of *D-Day* but, even more important, to an extremely costly delay of at least two months in the launching of the attack on German oil production.

LORD TEDDER LATER acknowledged a miscalculation in writing about the successful attacks on the Seine and other bridges in Western Europe (*With Prejudice*, p. 537):

"The rail and road bridges began to receive attention. Though expert opinion, with which I had concurred, had earlier held these targets to be relatively unprofitable for attack, our bomber crews now surpassed even their own high standards."

I take the larger lesson of this tale to be that high officials should read carefully the text of experts' reports, not merely their summary and conclusions.

W. W. ROSTOW

Department of Economics
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Austin, Texas

Lord Zuckerman's Reply

I INTERPRET Mr Rostow's comments to mean: first that in the planning of the 1944-45 offensive against the railway network of North-West Europe I had misguidedly persuaded Lord Tedder that not bridges but only railway centres should be destroyed, and that this advice was based on more than a fivefold error in my analysis of the results of bombing in Sicily; and second, that the failure to attack the Seine bridges sooner than they were bombed led to a delay of at least two months in the "strategic" offensive against German oil installations.

Mr Rostow's first assertion is incorrect. Had he been directly connected with the pre-*D-Day* planning for the invasion of France, he would have known that attacks on bridges had from the start been an integral part of the plan that was adopted. Estimates of 1,200 tons of bombs to "take out" a bridge, which he quotes from Craven & Cate, were not mine, but a Mr Brant's.

The Table which he has now constructed purports to show how many tons of bombs would have been needed to assure an 80% probability that a bridge would be hit or blocked. He claims that his figures were obtained by a regression analysis of my Sicilian data, using "a conservative hyperbolic exponential equation." I do not know exactly what this denotes, but straightforward calculations from the tonnages of bombs actually expended in the Sicilian raids, and the numbers of bridges that suffered damage, show either that his equation is unrealistic, or that his fitting procedure was faulty.

MY SICILIAN REPORT dealt with 35 attacks on rail bridges, with an average bomb load per raid of 75 tons. Seven "blocks" were achieved, i.e. a 20% probability of success. If repeated raids of the same average weight had been levelled at those bridges as were not blocked, and given that all bridges had been equally vulnerable, an average expenditure of 4×75 tons—i.e. 300 tons—per bridge would have been needed to block 80% of the bridges. If however an 80% probability of blockage had been demanded in a single raid, the required expenditure of bombs would have been far greater. If "*t*" is the average tonnage in the actual raids, "*p*" the probability of

a block (= percentage probability/100), the tonnage "*T*" required for a given probability "*P*" (here 0.8) is given by the formula:

$$T = t \log (1 - P) / \log (1 - p)$$

For blocks of rail bridges, this gives *T* = 541 tons, instead of 300 tons as estimated directly.

There is a trade-off here in economy of bombs and speed of attaining the desired results. In any event, apart from the element of chance about where bombs would fall, some bridges, for structural reasons, were likely to have been much more resistant than others to bomb damage (and, equally important, some more easily and quickly repaired).

The following table gives the values of *T* for the various categories of damage:

	Tonnages estimated from above formula	
	RAIL	ROAD
80%	320	233
80% blocked	541	359
80% traffic impeded	182	233

That there is something radically wrong with Mr Rostow's values is obvious from the fact that although in the raids on rail bridges only 7 of 11 bridges that were hit were blocked, his figures for these categories of damage are almost the same (397 and 409 tons). Whatever the cause of these discrepancies, they are a sad illustration (as my friend and statistical colleague Dr Frank Yates, FRS, has pointed out to me) of the danger of extrapolation by regression methods which are frequently adopted by economists, at the same time as they illustrate the danger of the uncritical use of computers.

Obviously the tonnage needed would, in fact, have depended on the bombing accuracy of the aircraft used in the pre-*D-Day* attacks, and on the size of the bombs that were dropped. At the beginning of May 1944, I presented to the Air planners a table giving estimates of the numbers of sorties for 1,000 and 2,000 lb bombs which would yield either one hit or six hits on six specified bridges across the Seine, taking into account their different constructions and assuming "the most efficient air formations about which we have definite evidence." I quote:

"The number of strikes which would ensure destruction of the bridges is very difficult to estimate. Slight variations in choice can make all the difference between a successful hit and a completely unsuccessful hit. Furthermore, it is to be remembered that the actual vulnerable area of a bridge is much smaller than is the presenting area. Such being the case it might prove in one case that one direct hit does all the damage that is required whereas in another up to six hits might be necessary."

SO FAR AS Mr Rostow's second proposition is concerned, all that needs to be said is that because of the "cover plan" and also for reasons of security, it had been decided by those responsible for the pre-*D-Day* air offensive that the Seine bridges could not be attacked before they in fact were.

It is meaningless to say that the timing of the attacks on bridges imposed "an extremely costly delay of at least two months" in launching attacks on German oil installations. Military plans do not "flow from computers."

LORD ZUCKERMAN held various scientific advisory posts to RAF Combined Operations from 1939-46, and has since been a chief scientific adviser to the British Government. He has had a distinguished career in anatomy and zoology (he is Professor Emeritus of the Universities of Birmingham and of East Anglia), and is a Trustee of the British Museum (Natural History). Among his books are "Scientists and War" (1966), "The Image of Technology" (1968), and "Beyond the Ivory Tower" (1970).

Whatever the "leashes" at which they might have been straining, the commanders of the so-called Tactical Air Forces were not involved in the offensive against oil. Furthermore, many considerations (e.g. weather and security) had to be taken into account before the bridges, which could have given away our Invasion Plan, were attacked. In any event, no oil plan had been formulated for consideration before late March 1944, i.e. barely two months before the invasion of Normandy. What is more, permission to attack some oil targets to see if they "would make the Germans come up and fight" was not given before early May. General Spaatz, who was in command of all the American Air Forces in Europe, was party to all decisions taken at the time.

Mr Rostow is tilting at windmills.

SOPLY ZUCKERMAN

House of Lords

Peter Bauer & Ali Mazrui

PROFESSOR ALI MAZRUI's Reith lectures were widely regarded as one of the more eccentric intellectual performances of the last twelve months. But their eccentricity and instability of judgment pales into insignificance when compared with the extraordinary attack on Mazrui by Peter Bauer in your June issue. It would take a letter as long as Bauer's article to grapple with all its excesses and inaccuracies. In any case, maybe one can leave the weight of Africanist historical scholarship to come to the defence of a libelled continent. In this letter I would like merely to come to the defence of libelled individuals.

Professor Bauer seems to be under the illusion that Mazrui is a spokesman of an authoritarian Left. In an outrageous sentence he manages to be equally unfair to Nyerere and to Mazrui. After a caricature of Nyerere's Tanzania, which he indicts for brutality, expropriation and enforced collectivisation, Bauer writes: "All this is forgiven by Mazrui, perhaps because Dr Nyerere is hostile to the West, to individual farming and private enterprise, and to personal freedom and property." In fact, the compulsory resettlement of Tanzania's rural population in villages has had almost nothing in common with collectivisation. It resembles, rather, the policies of "centralisation" so often suggested and sometimes attempted by Colonial administrators. Neither production nor distribution of income in these villages is communal; farming is carried on by individual peasant families; and there is plenty of scope for "private

enterprise"—so much so, indeed, that a recent study refers to the "uncaptured peasantry" of Tanzania.

But whatever may be the truth about Nyerere's Tanzania, there can be no doubt that Mazrui is *not* an "uncritical admirer" of it. It was Mazrui, after all, who coined the expression "Tanzaphilia" precisely to describe excessive and uncritical admiration for Nyerere. Mazrui has been a consistent critic of Tanzanian policies and positions. My own hearing of his Reith lectures was that he was once again being critical, rather than admiring, of Tanzania's foreign policy. His stress on Nyerere's role as philosopher President—on his personal integrity and humanity—is in fact the foundation of his criticism. Mazrui is wary of Good Great Men who are conscious of their own virtue: such men, he warns, feel themselves justified in interfering with others for their own good. It is a sentiment with which one might have expected to have appealed to Professor Bauer.

Bauer, however, is too busy casting Mazrui as a "destroyer" to pay much attention to his record. Thus he writes: "Obote . . . suppressed all political parties other than his own, and set up a tyrannical régime. . . . According to the blurb of his book, Professor Mazrui was an important influence in the national politics of Uganda under President Obote", as though Mazrui had been a *supporter* of Obote and a defender of his alleged infringements of liberty. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mazrui was, under Obote, an articulate and courageous critic of the régime and a spokesman for academic and press freedom.

Mazrui is an irritating man. Within Africa he has irritated precisely the sort of authoritarian men of the Left in whose ranks Bauer places him. I suppose that in deciding what to say in the Reith lectures he concluded that not many African authoritarian men of the Left were likely to be listening to Radio Four. So he irritated Professor Bauer instead. And Professor Bauer's irritation has turned out to be quite illuminating. His readiness to accuse Mazrui of hostility to personal freedom reveals all too clearly the authoritarianism within his own commitment to private enterprise.

TERENCE RANGER
Professor of Modern History

University of Manchester

1. The *Washington Post* is a liberal newspaper (in the American sense of the term liberal), and one which is notably friendly to the new Black Africa. On 6 May 1975 it carried an article on East Africa under the heading "WORLD BANK AIDS AFRICAN SOCIALISM." One passage reads:

"Tanzania is presently moving 6 million to 8 million peasants by persuasion or force into so-called planned villages in the largest mass movement of population ever attempted on this continent."

On 7 February 1977 a dispatch in the *Washington Post* from Tanzania was headed "TANZANIA'S COLLECTIVES REAP LITTLE FOOD, MUCH HOSTILITY", another in the *New York Times* of 1 February 1977 was headed "TANZANIANS, ON EVERY TOPIC FROM COFFEE TO STREET CRIME, ARE RESOLUTELY IDEOLOGICAL."

A report in the *Financial Times* (2 July 1980) is entitled "WHY TANZANIA'S SOCIALIST EXPERIMENT IS FAILING TO WORK." It refers to "... the socialist ujamaa programme . . . in which some 30 million people are

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being regrouped into 8,000 villages." It goes on . . . "Prof. Dumont points to the adverse impact on soil conservation and agricultural production of the 'villagisation' programme."

In recent years there were many other articles in *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, and the *New Statesman* on the forced mass movement of people in Tanzania and on the brutal methods employed.

A senior black African faculty member of the University of Dar-es-Salaam told me in 1976 that he thought the *Washington Post* figure of 6–8 million people moved forcibly was an overstatement. His own estimate was about 4–5 million. (An article in *The Times* put the figure at more than double the *Washington Post* estimate.)

2. It was Professor Mazrui's book and not his record that I was examining in the review, and I shall do so in even greater detail in a forthcoming book.

PETER BAUER

London School of Economics

Roots

ALI MAZRUI'S omission of any references to the Arab slave trade in his Reith lectures is even more remarkable than Peter Bauer suggests, ["Ali Mazrui, A Prophet out of Africa", *ENCOUNTER*, June].

For the Mazrui of Mombasa, originally an offshoot of the Mazari (plural of Mazrui) tribe of northern Oman, were some of the principal traffickers in slaves from East Africa at the time that Mombasa and the adjacent coast formed part of the dominions of the sultanate of Oman.

J. B. KELLY

London

AUTHORS

John Wain, novelist, critic, and poet, won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Heinemann Award for his biography of *Samuel Johnson* (Macmillan, 1974). He was Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1973–78, and this year sees the publication of his *Collected Poems*. His latest novel, *The Pardoner's Tale*, appeared in 1978.

David Riesman is Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University. His books include *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), *Abundance for What?* (1960), and, as co-author, *The Academic Revolution and Academic Values and Mass Education* (1968, 1970). His most recent contribution to *ENCOUNTER* was "The Anti-Organisational Syndrome" (September 1978).

Joseph Epstein teaches at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. His article is adapted from his 1979 Mencken Memorial Lecture given at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. His talk helped to put the theme of Mencken in the air for the 1980 centenary, and only the other day, in an interview with the *Sunday Times* in London, Saul Bellow

(deploring "a certain malaise" in the American cultural-intellectual situation) remarked:

"You know, back in better days, we had the likes of Mencken who called boobs, boobs and philistines, philistines. No one does that today. Who's around today to spot a Tartuffe? We used to have a healthy suspicion of such folk, but here are Reagan and Carter playing fundamentalist preachers, being true scions of that Southern 'booboisie', and nary a man to frown them out of sight. It worries me. Piety and God-mouthing is all we have going for us. It's like the Scopes evolution trial re-visited, only this time it's as though the monkeys had got hold of the Bible."

The drawing of Mencken by Lohnaas is reproduced here by kind permission of *The American Spectator*.

David Sweetman's first book of poems, *Looking Into The Deep End*, will be published by Faber & Faber in spring 1981.

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

Gerhard Koch is music and literary critic of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which his article first appeared.

Bernard Bergonzi is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. His study *Reading the Thirties* was published in 1978 by Macmillan Press, who in 1979 brought out a revised edition of *The Situation of the Novel*. A new edition of his study of the literature of World War One, *Heroes' Twilight* (1965), will be published later this year.

Alan Brownjohn's new book of poems, *A Night in the Gazebo*, will be published this autumn by Secker & Warburg.

Anthony Thwaite's latest volume of poems, *Victorian Voices*, will be published by Oxford University Press later this year.

Andreas Kohlschuetter is a reporter for *Die Weltwoche* in Zurich.

Herb Greer is an American author and playwright who has lived in Europe since the early 1950s. His previous contributions to *ENCOUNTER* include "Grim Argument" (April 1976) and "The Twopenny Candle" (June 1978).

The articles by **Alain Besançon** ("The View from East of Eden") and **Raymond Aron** ("Is There a Nazi Mystery?") which appeared in our June issue were originally published in the distinguished French quarterly journal *Commentaire*.

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Life & Letters Today

London

DEFINITIONS: A 70-year-old Jewish businessman who has been campaigning for 10 years to persuade dictionary publishers to delete "offensive" or "derogatory" definitions of the word, "Jew," claimed another victory yesterday.

Collins have sent Mr Marcus Sholoimovitz a photocopy of a page of their "Concise English Dictionary" published last Autumn which omits references like "miser" and "skinflint." "It is completely satisfactory to me", he said. "They have deleted all derogatory references."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

"TRICHOTOMY"?: It was inevitable that someone would eventually produce "trichotomy" in print. It is clearly formed from "dichotomy" on the assumption that di- implies two and -chotomy something like separation. This is not the case: the roots are *dicha* meaning "apart" and *tomia* meaning "cutting". Though *dicha* is connected with the Greek word for "two", it can mean any number of divisions.

What then should trichotomy mean? Since the Greek root *tricho-* means "hair", what has unintentionally been produced is the Greek for "haircut." Or perhaps the laugh is on me, for splitting hairs so pedantically. It may have intended to suggest, very subtly, that Aristotle's three-part classification of rhetoric was too nit-picking. If so, the neologism may have a use: in the sense of "pedantic three-way hair-splitting", "trichotomy" may yet survive.

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

London

A GROCKLE: My first encounter with the term "grockle" was in 1965 when I saw a film called "The System."

The "grockle" was broadly described as a typical British holiday-maker, the male of the species being recognisable by certain distinctive features such as: knotted handkerchief on head, white shirt unbuttoned displaying red chest and/or string vest, grey flannel trousers rolled up to mid-calf and supported by braces, maroon socks and sandals.

Rumour has it that during the last decade, this creature's habit of an annual pilgrimage to the seaside from the depths of the Midlands has changed somewhat.

They can now be seen in ever increasing numbers on the south coast of Spain, where they are instantly recognisable even though the plumage may have changed a little. They often have rather loud voices, which receive regular exercise, complaining of the lack of a decent fish and chip shop or the unavailability of mushy peas.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

New York City

"TO" OR NOT "TO": Showing off the length of my research arm, I recently wrote [William Safire writes]

that "I wrote the British Library." (Most Americans call it the British Museum, but that leaves them cold in London.)

Although I have written a few books, when I wrote, "I wrote the British Library," I did not intend to claim having written the entire contents of that institution. Rather, I meant: I (subject) wrote (predicate) a letter (direct object) to the British Library (indirect object). The question is this: When the direct object ("a letter") is understood, is the preposition "to" needed before the indirect object ("the British Library")? Put less pedantically, do you have to write that you are writing to somebody, or can you just write somebody?

In England, accepted usage calls for the "to". In America, after more than two centuries of independence, you can forget the "to" after the verb "to write." Don't fuss about logic; that's the way it is. Idioms is idioms, and respect no imprimaturs. The English laugh at our "bums"; we laugh at their "I'll knock you up in the morning."

A researcher summed up her findings with the most scrupulously correct sentence that can be put together on the different usages: "You may write the Library of Congress, but you must write to the British Library."

NEW YORK TIMES

Westminster

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Ex-Prime Minister Callaghan, seemed to get in a tangle with the Old and New Testaments in the Commons when answering questions about his agreement with the Trades Union Congress.

After Donald Stewart, the Scottish Nationalist leader, dismissed the document as "bogus optimism," Mr Callaghan retorted that he might have said much the same about the Sermon on the Mount—and added that "perhaps the Old Testament language is rather more imaginative and colourful."

Then he hurriedly corrected himself after Ministers alongside him quietly drew attention to his gaffe. Callaghan got the wrong Testament.

In another exchange, Mr Callaghan preferred the January version of Mr Prior to the February one. And he saw the Employment Secretary's conversion as the fastest thing since St Paul on the road to . . .

"Damascus," shouted MPs on both sides, anxious that he should at least get that right.

DAILY TELEGRAPH/DAILY MAIL

Bonn

WORDAGE: The legendary fee which Ernest Hemingway commanded in 1952 for his novella, "The Old Man & the Sea"—a hundred dollars per word—has been overtaken. A German writer, Gerhard Zwerenz, has just received 1250 DM per word. But it was not exactly a very happy transaction. Zwerenz was paid for his translation of the film script of Fellini's "Satyricon." But in the final version of the film only four words of his text were actually used.

DIE WELT

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